

DE MONTFORT UNIVERSITY

**WILLIAM JAMES NEATBY
ARTIST AND DESIGNER
1860-1910**

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CHAPTER SEVEN

THE MASTER OF ARCHITECTURAL CERAMICS: 1890-1901

When Neatby moved to London in 1890, it was to take up the position of head designer of the architectural department at Doulton and Company of Lambeth.¹ In his new appointment he will have found himself in an environment long steeped in traditions connected with architectural ceramics. Coade stone, with its moulded, fired-clay body, an early form of architectural ceramic produced by Eleanor Coade, was produced in Lambeth from 1769² and, operating as Doulton and Watts, John Doulton had started to produce ceramic building components such as chimney pots and roof tiles in the 1820s. This range of terra cotta building products was enlarged by Henry Doulton in the late 1830s when statuary was added to the more utilitarian range of goods on offer. By the late 1870s, now styled Doulton and Co., the firm had become one of the leading manufacturers and suppliers of architectural ceramics in Britain.³

Little is known of Neatby's early career at Doulton's. Indeed, in more general terms, much of the history of Doulton's contribution to the development of architectural ceramics remains

¹ 'W.J. Neatby's work and a new process', *The Artist*, xxv (1899), p. 91.

² Stratton, Michael : *The Terracotta Revival* (1993), pp. 46-47.

³ Atterbury, Paul and Irvine, Louise : *The Doulton Story* (1979), pp. 67-69.

unclear. The start of the second world war effectively terminated the firm's involvement with building components and the austerity of post-war years and changes in fashion prevented a resurgence of activity in this area. When Doulton's Lambeth factory finally closed in 1956, surviving records that pertained to the architectural ceramics department were destroyed.⁴ Consequently, not only is Neatby's work record difficult to elucidate but many building projects that involved the firm are still to be identified or have already been destroyed without attribution. In some instances the terra cotta suppliers for buildings may have been wrongly identified, while at the Refuge Assurance Building in Manchester, although *The Doulton Story* suggests that all the architectural ceramics within the building are Doulton's, in fact, the extensive scheme of interior faience was provided by Burmantofts.⁵ This confusion, and paucity of records, means that most of the information relating to Neatby that remains is to be found in the contemporary trade press and on extant architectural works that bear his signature.

Doulton's choice of Neatby to head their architectural design department merits some consideration here. Over a period of several decades the company had built up a close relationship with both the Lambeth School of Art and the National Art Training School at South Kensington and through these associations found itself at the centre of new developments in sculpture that were taking place in the closing decades of the nineteenth

⁴ Information from Louise Irvine.

⁵ Atterbury, Paul and Irvine, Louise : *Ibid* (1979), catalogue no. 10; Cunningham, C., and Waterhouse, P. : *Alfred Waterhouse 1830-1905: Biography of a Practice* (1992), Appendix I, no. 570.

century. Artistically, the inspiration for much of the innovation that was taking place in the area of clay modelling, leading to commercially produced terra cotta sculpture, resided in the work of the French sculptor Aimé-Jules Dalou (1838-1902), who took up a teaching post at South Kensington in May 1877. Administratively, the close professional relationship formed between Henry Doulton and John Charles Lewis Sparkes, who began liaising with Doulton in 1869 when Headmaster at Lambeth and who assumed the same role at the National Art Training School in 1876, effected a translation of this training into hard commercial practice. Doulton was quick to appreciate the value of education, agreeing to give factory apprentices pay increases when they passed exams at the Lambeth school.⁶ This led to the formation of a highly professional and well-trained workforce at the factory, with sculptors such as George Tinworth, John Broad and Mark V. Marshall all working at Doulton's in 1890, when Neatby arrived. In addition to these workers, the Lambeth firm also employed a number of skilled artists capable of producing two dimensional designs, with J.H. McLennan and Esther Lewis being particularly prolific in the production of hand-painted tile panels.⁷

Considering the traditions established at Doulton's in respect of their workforce, it is perhaps difficult to comprehend why the firm should have employed Neatby in so senior a position. George Tinworth, who trained at the Lambeth School of Art, has been described as 'the most famous terracotta sculptor of the Victorian era'⁸ and he and John Broad were technically far

⁶ Beattie, S.: *The New Sculpture* (London : Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 14-17.

⁷ Atterbury, Paul and Irvine, Louise : *op. cit.* (1979), p. 71.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

more accomplished sculptors than Neatby. The same type of comment can be made for several of the painters employed at Doulton's. In general standards of both training and practical skills were high at the factory. Neatby, however, had no formal art training and lacked the technical dexterity of many of his contemporaries. On the positive side this absence of formality in his work meant that Neatby brought a new dimension to Doulton's designs, but it was probably for his other abilities and experience that the company wanted him on the staff. Certainly, Neatby was versatile and his range of experience very varied. At Burmantofts he was probably in charge of most, if not all, of their architectural projects. His administrative skills and experience of authority must have proved an advantage at Doulton's, where the more numerous and better trained artists will have required organizing by someone who possessed an artistic background but who could equally easily operate in the 'trade' environment of architects and builders. Added to this, Neatby was a successful graphic artist and designer. However, it was probably his architectural training that won Neatby the job at Lambeth. Above all, Neatby could be expected to work well in close co-operation with architects and to an architectural ceramics firm, always aware of the competition from other manufacturers, this concern must have been paramount. Neatby had a proven record of a number of prestigious construction projects brought to successful completion and this must have given him a credibility in the architectural community. He had also worked with a number of important local and national architects, such as Alfred Waterhouse, and Doulton's may have considered that the acquisition of Neatby might also result in their acquiring work from some of his former clients at Burmantofts. If this was the case, their expectations were rewarded when they were given the contract to supply the terracotta for the extensive Refuge Assurance Company

building in Manchester, a project that involved Alfred Waterhouse from 1891-1896. So eager were they to be awarded the contract that Doulton's seem to have invested in the building of new kilns to service the requirements of colour and high quality for the terracotta demanded by Waterhouse. Taking into account the enormous expense that this entailed for Doulton's, it is not known if the project was a financial success for the company. Although Waterhouse appears to have been pleased with the result, unfortunately Doulton's name features only rarely on the list of suppliers of materials for subsequent projects.⁹

A chronological survey of architectural work for Doulton.

Neatby's career at Doulton's is best viewed through the building projects with which he is known to have been associated during his time with the company. The evidence for these is based either in extant buildings, trade press reports or both. Through a chronologically based study it is possible to perceive the evolution of Neatby's mature style and to suggest influences which may have led to particular developments in his work. As head designer for Doulton's architectural ceramics department he presumably had some involvement in virtually all of the firm's major building projects but as this cannot be quantified, with minor exceptions, only the schemes for which there is unequivocal evidence are considered below.¹⁰

⁹ Cunningham, C., and Waterhouse, P. : *Alfred Waterhouse 1830-1905: Biography of a Practice* (1992), p. 161.

¹⁰ The majority of buildings cited below are associated with Neatby in a list of Doulton's architectural projects that form the final section of Atterbury, Paul and Irvine, Louise : *The Doulton Story* (1979), pp. 76-103. Rather than cite that publication, references given here are from primary sources, usually contemporary trade literature. In some instances the buildings identified here as having a design input from Neatby are not listed in *The Doulton Story* and in one example the building is listed but not associated with Neatby.



Plate 7.1. 54-55 Cornhill, London, Ernest Runtz (c.1893). Front elevation.

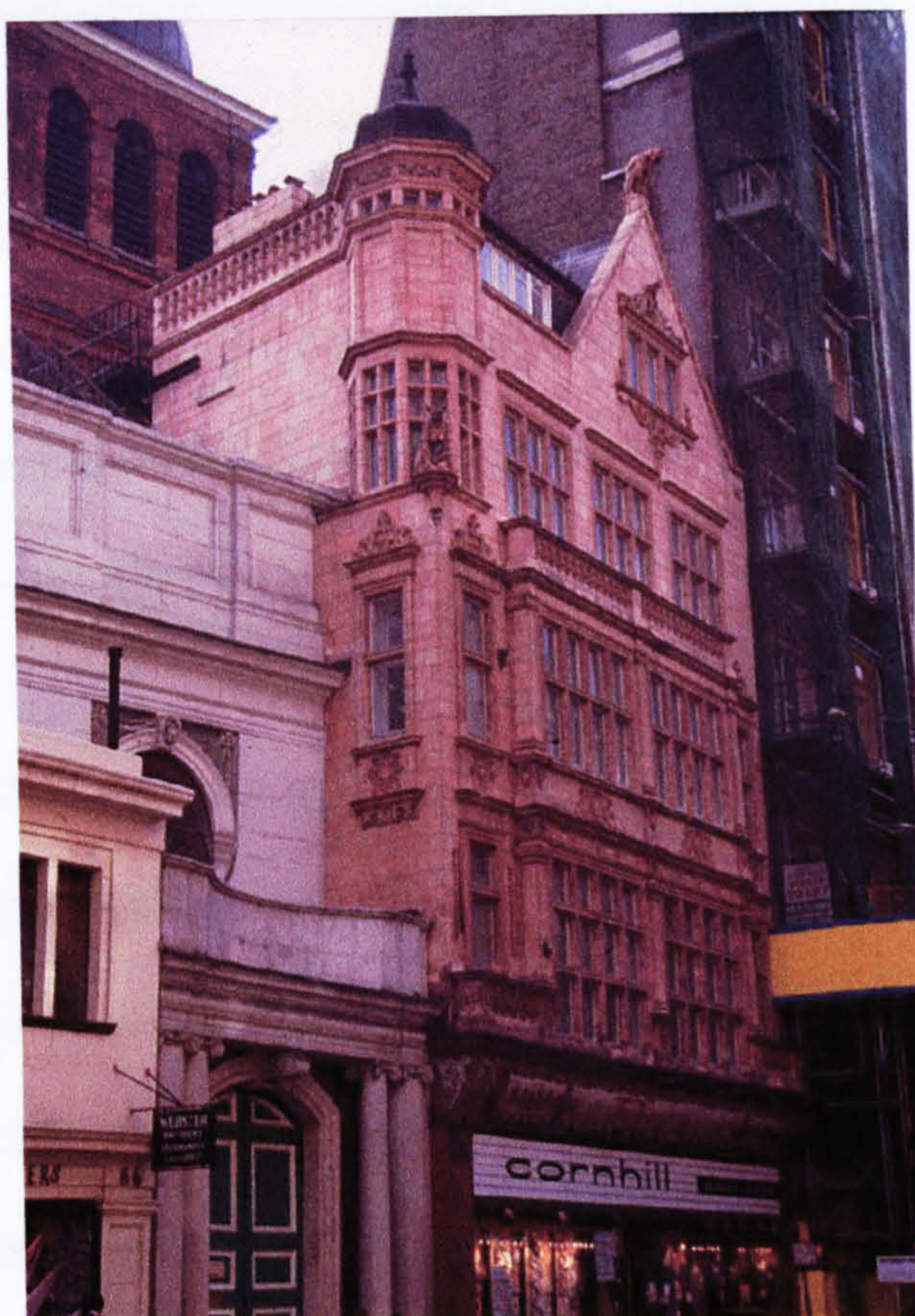


Plate 7.2. 54-55 Cornhill, London. View showing corner turret.

The earliest building that can be substantiated as featuring work by Neatby, executed during his years at Doulton's, can still be seen at 54-55 Cornhill, London EC3. This building, built in a 17th-century style, was designed by the architect Ernest Runtz who penned Neatby's obituary and with whom he was to work on several occasions.¹¹ Above its modern shop front the facade of the building is completely clad in a pinkish red terracotta, including ceramic mullions and transoms for the windows, imitating stone construction. Plate 7.1 illustrates the front elevation of the building which extends for a further four floors above the ground floor shop premises. The symmetrical arrangement of the fenestration on the first and second floor levels, articulated with superimposed Doric and Ionic pilasters and with two large central windows bounded by two smaller ones, is replaced at the third with three large windows. At this level the symmetry is interrupted by an octagonal turret (see Plate 7.2 for a side elevation showing this feature) which springs from the corner of the building, continuing upwards to a fifth floor, above which it is capped by a small octagonal dome. At this level the main feature of the front facade is a high pointed gable which is punctuated by an ornately framed three-light window (Plate 7.3).

Although the entire scheme for the ceramic facade may have been Neatby's, it is in the decorative details that his design presence can be ascertained. Here the references are once again to the English Renaissance, with cartouches bearing either cut or cabochon jewel centres decorating the dies of the pilasters, and windows being surmounted by strapwork and grotesques in the form of pairs of opposing, rather than confronting, dragons. Plate 7.4 illustrates a decorative motif, that separates the first and second floor windows, which

¹¹ Runtz, E., 'The Late W. J. Neatby', *The Architect and Contract Reporter*, lxxxiv (1910), p. 55.



Plate 7.3. 54-55 Cornhill, London. Gable window.



Plate 7.4. 54-55 Cornhill, London. Decorative motifs.



Plate 7.5. Corner turret showing Devil figure by Neatby.



Plate 7.6. Close-up view of Devil figure perched on plinth.

combines both cartouche and grotesque components. In addition, the scheme displays three grotesque devils: the first (see Plates 7.5 and 7.6) stands on a plinth that springs from the corner of the building at the base of the octagonal turret; the second which is a devil's head at the apex of the decoration above the uppermost window (see Plate 7.7); thirdly, the figure that perches above the main gable of the building (see Plate 7.8). The second of these figures is integral to the ceramic facade decoration but the first and third are independent three-dimensional sculptures and it is with reference to the last of these figures that Neatby's contribution to the ceramic decorative scheme can be established.

In an article on Neatby's career in 1899, the *Artist* illustrates the devil that is located at the top of the building, reproduced here as Plate 7.9, and makes the following observations:

‘The terra-cotta demon was evolved, we presume, from the designer's inner consciousness, in response to an architect's demand for a ‘devil’ to be used as a terminal on the gable of the huge terra-cotta buildings in Cornhill, and in respect of being an eerie and grotesque compound of man, woman, bird and beast is certainly a success. Our illustration is from Mr. Neatby's clay model, and shows the monster as nearly as possible as it would look *in situ* relieved against the sky, and peering down on the throng of busy traffickers. It is curious to note how a certain coarseness of texture in execution has been used to give an additional repulsiveness to the object.’¹²

¹² ‘W.J. Neatby's work and a new process’, *The Artist*, xxv (1899), p. 94.



Plate 7.7. 54-55 Cornhill. View of gable showing small Devil's head above upper window.



Plate7.8. Sculpture of Devil on top of the gable.



Plate 7.9. Studio picture of terracotta Devil, five feet high, designed and modelled by Neatby. Taken from *The Artist*, xxv (1899), p. 94.

The scheme of decoration for the Cornhill building is broadly comparable with a number of other terracotta facades of the period. The structural format is rather restrained and dictates the positioning and character of the decorative detail. Even in its use of three-dimensional sculpture the facade shows little of the excesses of, for example, George and Peto's town house at 52 Cadogan Square, London SW1, of 1886, where, as can be seen in Plates 7.10 and 7.11, Mannerist details, density of decorative motifs and contrasts in the colour of building materials combine to produce a design confection rather than an architectural construction.¹³ However, the Cornhill scheme illustrates a considerable evolution in the development of Neatby's personal style. In his use of moulded bas-relief sculptural elements Neatby draws upon his design experience at Burmantofts, where strapwork, scrollwork and grotesques characterized his repertoire, but here, such components appear to be executed with a much greater depth of relief, with the resultant increase in definition contributing significantly to the visual effect from street level. Neatby appears to be giving increased consideration to the urban environment of his work, in a location where the height of the building provides a distinct challenge to the designer of terracotta details.

The quote taken from the *Artist*, reproduced above, probably says almost all that can be said about the choice of iconography for the building. The bas-relief dragons seem to have been part of the standard 'patterning' of late-Victorian terracotta designers, but the devils seem an unusual choice of subject matter. Why they were chosen is however of secondary importance compared to their form and style of execution. The creation of sculpture 'in the round' marks

¹³ *Builder*, L (1886), p. 708.



Plate 7.10. Town house, 52 Cadogan Square, London, George and Peto (1886).



Plate 7.11. Detail of balcony showing musician figures, 52 Cadogan Square, London. Terracotta by Doulton.

a new and important departure in Neatby's work. Both the devil on the gable, stated in the *Artist* to be five feet high, and the devil at the corner of the building are comparatively large components in terms of terracotta details. The figures were first modelled in clay, then cast in terra-cotta. They represent two entirely different models although both appear based on the same type of creature with a mix of animal characteristics, such as claws and horns, and human attributes, such as human female breasts. The devil on the gable has a distinctly human face although his lower companion appears, facially, somewhat more bestial. The folds visible in the skin of the devils, remarked upon in the *Artist* as a 'coarseness of texture', do indeed create an 'additional repulsiveness' in the figures. The beasts appear to be swathed in a surfeit of skin, to be capable of expansion to fill the excess or perhaps to have been once larger and now older and decaying. Whatever Neatby's thoughts on the matter were, the figures are very expressive and their impact immediate. Both in this and the greater emphasis placed on the bas-relief work on the building, Neatby illustrates an awareness of and a desire to be part of the new developments in English sculpture that were taking place in the last two decades of the 19th century.¹⁴

The next work that can be substantiated as a Neatby creation dates to the following year, 1894, and is the facade of the Board School Offices, Chapel Street, Salford, Greater Manchester (Plate 7.12). This building, completed in 1895, designed by the local architectural firm of Woodhouse and Willoughby, was one of a number of public building projects undertaken by the partnership in the Manchester area, Lancashire, Cheshire and Derbyshire. The firm seems

¹⁴ See Beattie, S., *The New Sculpture* (1983), chaps. 3 and 4, for a full discussion of these developments.



Plate 7.12. Salford Board School, Woodhouse and Willoughby (1894).

to have specialized in buildings connected with education, public halls and fire and police stations.¹⁵ This was the sector of the construction industry that was perhaps most open to new materials such as architectural ceramics and so it is not surprising that this was their choice for the Salford Board School building. Why they chose Doulton's rather than, for example, Burmantofts or Gibbs and Canning of Tamworth, Staffordshire, the latter having already supplied materials for J. A. Hanson's Church of the Holy Name of Jesus, Manchester (1869-71) and the Town Hall, Manchester (1868-77) by Alfred Waterhouse, must remain a matter of conjecture. Certainly, for his innovative concrete and ceramic Y.M.C.A. building in Peter Street, Manchester, constructed in 1909-11, Woodhouse's then current partnership of Woodhouse, Corbett and Dean chose Burmantofts as their supplier.¹⁶

The authentication of the Salford Board School facade as a work by Neatby rests on the identification of Neatby's signature on one of the decorative panels on the building, and an illustration of another panel (Plate 7.13), entitled: 'FROM BOARD SCHOOL OFFICES SALFORD WOODHOUSE & WILLOUGHBY ARCHITECTS', which is identical to that shown in Plate 7.14 from the building, on a page of three photographs published by the *British Architect* under the title: 'SCULPTURED DECORATION MADE BY DOULTON & CO DESIGNED BY W.J. NEATBY'.¹⁷

¹⁵ Gray, A. Stuart : *Edwardian Architecture* (1985), pp. 391-92.

¹⁶ Stratton, Michael : *The Terracotta Revival* (1993), pp. 71-72; 118-119.

¹⁷ 'Sculptured Work. By W.J. Neatby', *British Architect*, xlv (1896), p. 199; illustration p. 205.



Plate 7.13. Salford Board School terracotta panel as illustrated in the *British Architect*.



Plate 7.14. Salford Board School, grotesque face-mask panel by Neatby.

The front elevation of the Board School Offices is shown in Plate 7.15. The photograph portrays a facade constructed in buff to light red terra-cotta blocks above an exposed grey stone basement storey. The overall stylistic influence on the building's design is the English Renaissance which has allowed the architect to create a superficial appearance of regularity while sacrificing Classical tenets to the asymmetry required by the various functional demands required of the building. This latter feature is well illustrated by the disposition of the entrances to the building and by the inclusion of a two-storey oriel window at the west end of the facade. The oriel, while suggesting a reasonable interpretation of an English Elizabethan/Jacobean form would more likely have been placed centrally above the main entrance in the Renaissance. Further instances of the lack of symmetry in the structure can be seen in the peculiar arrangement of towers and gables at the top of the building. Plates 7.16 and 7.17 show a further disregard of Classical principles in a characteristically Victorian illogical superimposition of pilasters above the main entrance. Here, a ground level Tuscan order is surmounted by an Ionic. However, the continuation of the feature at the second storey level resorts once more to a Tuscan prototype, this time with heavy rustication. Above this, the flattened pilasters defy classification and are eventually topped by pylons.

Presumably, Neatby produced the drawings for the ceramic blocks to the architect's instructions as the scale of the facade with its overall unity of theme take it beyond the scope of localized decoration that might be left to Doulton's design department. However, the low-relief decorative panels which adorn the building are executed in Neatby's own distinctive style and are particularly appropriate to the overall stylistic concept of the front elevation. A range



Plate 7.15. Salford Board School front elevation.



Plate 7.16. Salford Board School, main entrance showing the superimposition of orders



Plate 7.17. Salford Board School, projecting structure above the main entrance.



Plate 7.18. Salford Board School, terracotta ornament.

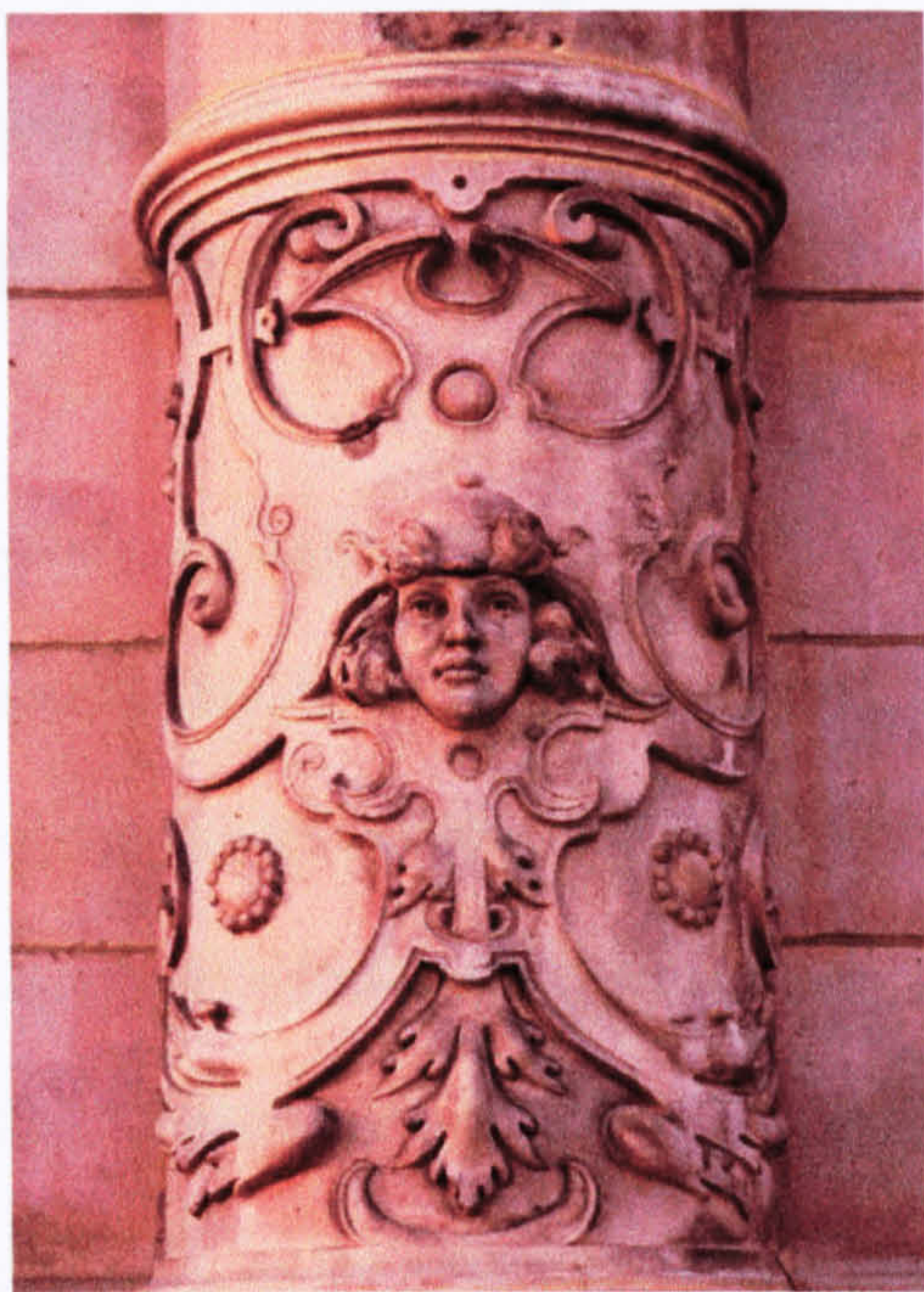


Plate 7.20. Salford Board School, Classically inspired column decoration.



Plate 7.19. Salford Board School, ornamental bracket.



Plate 7.21. Salford Board School, pilaster capital with inverted heart-shaped leaf motif.

of these panels is illustrated in Plates 7.14 and 7.18-7.21. These need little individual comment as they broadly adhere to the well established Renaissance style developed by Neatby over the previous ten years. There is however, a greater sophistication shown in this collection than in previous works, with greater attention to detail and finish, particularly on the human heads which receive particular emphasis in this group of reliefs. The strapwork and scrollwork are much in evidence but appear to show a more pronounced and expressive curvilinear form than on his designs for Burmantofts. This may be due to an increasing confidence in his own design skills but may also reflect Neatby's familiarity with new directions in art styles. Certainly, Plate 7.21 is particularly suggestive of the Art Nouveau forms that were to characterize his more mature work, with the central motif perhaps providing a prototype for the leaf and heart shapes that he was to adopt.

While the Salford Board School building was under construction Neatby was involved with perhaps his most prestigious decorative scheme for a public building. The structure involved was the South Building (former New Physical Observatory), Royal Greenwich Observatory as illustrated in Plate 7.22. Once again, Neatby's direct involvement in the project is authenticated by the presence of two signatures *in situ* and by a photograph in the *British Architect*, appearing on the same page as the Salford Board School panel mentioned above, and described as: 'WINDOW APRON FROM THE ROYAL OBSERVATORY GREENWICH "ASTRONOMIA"'.¹⁸

¹⁸ 'Sculptured Work. By W.J. Neatby', *British Architect*, xlv (1896), p. 199; illustration p. 205.



Plate 7.22. South Building (former New Physical Observatory), Royal Greenwich Observatory.



Plate 7.23. Royal Observatory, bay window situated at the intersection of the north and west wings.

Standing just to the south of the main complex of the Royal Observatory at Greenwich, this rather ornate brick and light-red terracotta building was designed by the architect William Crisp. Little is known about the architect but after working in the office of Rowland Plumbe (1838-1913) in 1872, by 1880 Crisp was in independent practice. Before the end of the decade he had taken a post on the staff of the Admiralty's Works Directorate where he seems also to have been involved with engineering work.¹⁹

Although the building was designed by Crisp, it seems to have been a project first envisaged by William Henry Mahoney Christie (1845-1922) the Astronomer Royal of the day, who not only conceived of the new observatory but continuously promoted its advantages to a financially stringent and bureaucratically minded Admiralty. A letter of 8th August, 1889, from Christie to the Secretary to the Admiralty suggests the construction of a new 'brick' building in a manner that suggests a relatively minor project involving minimal expenditure, but from the start, Christie appears to have had formidable aspirations for the new observatory. Crisp was approached to design the building and in concert with Christie he produced the plan for the cruciform building that stands on the site today. The building was to be built in stages, presumably in deference to Admiralty budgets, between 1891 and 1899, yet from the start Christie seems to have visualized something more than a mere functional housing for scientific equipment and activities. In a letter dated 25th October 1890, written by Christie to the Director of Works, the Admiralty, before the scheme was commenced, he suggested that 'slight

¹⁹ Saint, A., *South Building (former New Physical Observatory), Royal Greenwich Observatory, L. B. of Greenwich* (February 1994), unpublished notes supplied by the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

ornamentation of the east and west walls of the octagon might be attempted (at small expense) so that they should not be altogether out of keeping with the north and south wings'.²⁰

In the event, for reasons of economy, one major change was to be adopted which altered the final appearance of the building. A note for 15th August 1892 proposed the use of terracotta for decorative features in lieu of Red Mansfield stone on cost grounds. Quite how much money this saved is not known but the decision is of importance here as the firm chosen to supply the architectural ceramic components was Doulton and Co. On the positive side, this brought Neatby and his fellow ceramic designers into association with the project, however, during the construction of the building this decision must often have been regretted. The problem that resulted from the decision to change to ceramic ornamental dressings was to do with the supply of the terracotta components. In the records of the Royal Observatory for 1893 there are several mentions of shortages of terracotta which caused lay-offs and delays. The difficulties seem to have continued throughout the building work and in a letter of 25th June 1895, written by Christie to the Director of Works at the Admiralty, he comments that work on the north wing of the building has been held up due to lack of terracotta supply. He continues with the information that the builders had been waiting for three months for terracotta and that, in consequence, all work on the building had to be suspended for two months. So far behind schedule did the work become that Doulton's were still submitting minor items of terracotta

²⁰ *Royal Observatory Records (New Physical Observatory)*, 'Buildings and Grounds 1889-99', MS. RG07/50, held at Cambridge University.

work for approval as late as 1898.²¹

Other than complaints about Doulton's inability to service their contract on time, in the Observatory records there are unfortunately few detailed references to the company's involvement in the project. A sculptor, J. Raymond Smith, of 246A Marylebone Road, is recorded as having called at the Observatory on 5th November, 1894, to collect an ivory medallion and engravings of the first Astronomer Royal, John Flamsteed (1646-1719) for use in making the terracotta bust of him that now adorns the building. This mention of an individual is rare but does fortunately connect with a letter sent from J. Sims, of the Admiralty, to Christie in October 1895 which says:

‘Dear Mr. Christie, I am sorry you were unable to be at Messrs Doulton's today. They submitted, in the rough, the Model of Tympanum in connection with the bust of Flamsteed; I think it was satisfactory and have so informed them, but they have arranged that you can see it any day this week’.²²

This letter makes no mention of the difficulties recorded above and suggests that from a design perspective Neatby maintained a well organized department, with supply problems being related to the manufacturing side of the business.

An inspection of the terracotta decorative details on the South Building of the Royal

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Royal Observatory Records (New Physical Observatory)*, ‘Buildings and Grounds 1889-99’, MS. RG07/50, held at Cambridge University.



Plate 7.24. Royal Observatory, bay window, upper decorative panels by Neatby.



Plate 7.25. Royal Observatory, close-up of central panel by Neatby.

Observatory suggests that a number of different modellers worked on the project. Neatby, as head designer, presumably directed operations on behalf of Doulton's, nominating artists such as Smith to undertake the work. His own direct input was focused on one particular location on the building, a bay window (Plate 7.23) situated at the intersection of the north and west wings.

On a building that combines a number of Italianate features to produce a style that seems characteristic of the Victoria and Albert Museum, Neatby's decorative scheme seems somewhat incongruous. A building that might well have pleased Prince Albert around the middle years of the century must have looked decidedly out-of-date by 1890s yet Neatby's own work on the building was completely of its period, a *fin-de-siècle* extravaganza.

Plate 7.23 illustrates this work, which comprises a run of three decorated terracotta panels located horizontally above the centre point of the window and a lavish decorated terracotta apron at its base. As can be seen on Plate 7.24, although the upper scheme of decoration is divided by mullions that extend into the glazed areas above and below the terracotta panels, the three panels nevertheless comprise a single decorative entity with the two outside panels containing scrolling foliate designs that emanate from the central shield-shaped device. At the focal point of this composition, shown in detail in Plate 7.25, is a spectre-like female head surmounted by a bat and finally above that a six-pointed star.

The work is conceived and executed with reference to theories current among Art Nouveau

stylists of the day. The central shield or patera-shaped setting for the female head presents a formal, even Classical, heart to the visual arrangement, and this mood is extended into the leaf-scrolls that find their origins at the base of the neck of the female head, perhaps as symbolic extensions of her hair. The hair itself is rendered in a curvilinear manner reminiscent of Franco-Belgian Art Nouveau styles. To either side of the central panel, the scrolling foliage supports torches or ceremonial tazze in which offerings burn producing curling trails of smoke. Stylistically, the juxtaposition of Art-Nouveau curvilinear motifs with those of Classical derivation need present no theoretical design problems in this period of wholesale eclecticism and much of the work complements the Classical references in the building as a whole. Even the choice of motifs may be seen as an extension of ancient beliefs, but in their execution Neatby is responding to contemporary visual expectations and is interpreting his subject matter from a late 19th-century viewpoint.

In relation to the avant-garde art styles of the 1890s, the composition is fully explicable in terms of the function of the building as a night-time astronomical observatory and illustrates Neatby's adherence to a perception of modernity that relates to his own understanding of recent cultural developments in art. The sleeping woman at the centre of the trio of panels could represent any one of a number of ancient female deities associated with either night, sleeping or, in more familiar terms, with astrology. For practical purposes the exact identification of the deity is unnecessary, what matters is that she is shown sleeping and that associates her with night, the time when observations of the heavens are made. The bat, with outstretched wings, that sits on top of her head is a familiar creature in symbolist iconography

of the 1890s. Bats have a long association in art with death and darkness but is here presumably representative of the creature who has ‘vision’ at night when others are blind. The bat makes frequent appearances in symbolist works of the period, particularly in the creations of Emile Gallé who produced numerous glass vases decorated with this motif. Gallé was directly inspired by an anthology of verse *Les Chauves-Souris* published by Count Robert de Montesquiou in 1892.²³ Montesquiou’s writings, while clearly influential in French symbolist literary and artistic circles, may not have been read by Neatby. However, the visual manifestations of his ideas must have had an impact even in England, through the works of Gallé and others.²⁴ An interesting visual expression of a similar theme to that of Neatby’s observatory design can be observed on a poster by Alphonse Mucha, *Zodiac*, dating to 1896.²⁵ On the original design for this work, below the typical portrayal of an art nouveau style female beauty whose head is surrounded by astrological symbols, a panel depicts two women with their arms over each other’s shoulders. One woman holds a flaming torch and has a bird’s wing while the other has a star in her hand and a bat’s wing. The figures presumably represent night and day and dark and light and their connection with astrology is obvious. However, the association of woman, a star, a bat and a torch is identical to that combination used by Neatby. Unfortunately, Mucha’s *Zodiac*, unless it existed in an even earlier version, does not suggest itself as a reference for Neatby’s work here, as the right-hand panel, of the three, is clearly inscribed:

²³ Garner, P. : *Emile Gallé* (1990), pp. 128-133.

²⁴ Gallé did not open a shop in London until 1904, see Garner, P., *Ibid.*, p. 40, but it is likely that Neatby would have been familiar with his work before that date.

²⁵ Mucha, J. : *Alphonse Maria Mucha, His Life and Art* (London : Academy Editions, 1989), p. 92, illustration p. 78. This work was issued as a calendar, without the panel described above, in 1897.

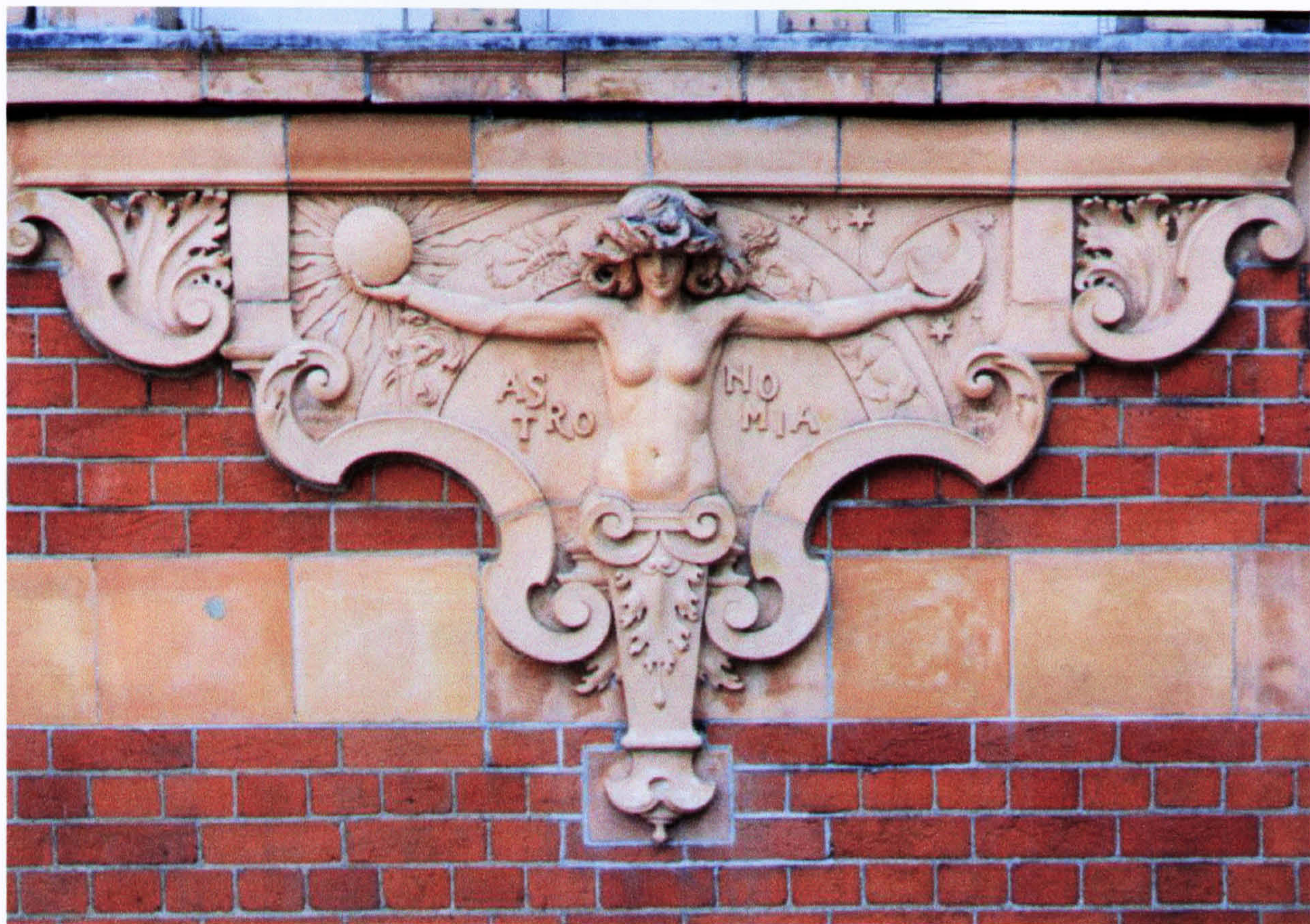


Plate 7.26. Royal Observatory, Astronomia window apron by Neatby.



Plate 7.27. Detail of Astronomia figure by Neatby.

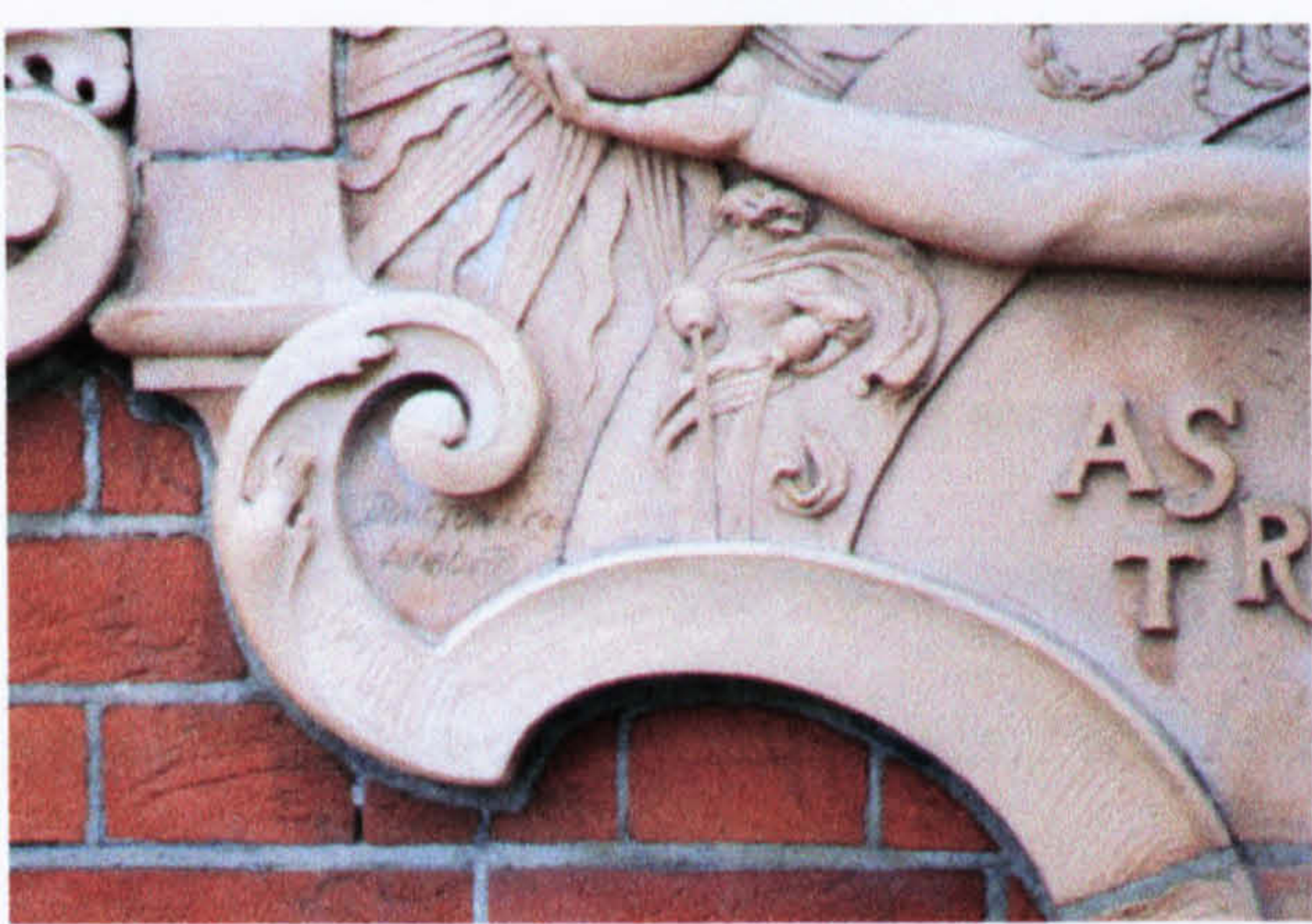


Plate 7.28. Detail of Astronomia panel showing Doulton marks.



Plate 7.29. Detail of Astronomia panel showing Neatby's signature.

‘WJN 1895’.

From the viewpoint of sculptural precision, the *tour de force* of Neatby’s scheme is the terracotta apron at the base of the window (Plate 7.26). Here, the goddess Astronomia surmounts a tapering pedestal-like support in the manner of a term. Behind her is an arc containing representations of astrological signs, stars and a comet, while in her hands she holds the Sun and the Moon. The design is bounded by a series of strapwork scrolls, which combined with the terminal support for the main figure gives the whole an appearance of a Renaissance creation by Hans Vredeman de Vries (1527-1606). This impression is however prevented by the style of the central figure of Astronomia. Sculpturally, this is perhaps Neatby’s most academic and technically proficient work. The figure, Plate 7.27, is an idealized conception and in the attention to detail, musculature and smooth finish has much in common with contemporary French Salon nude sculptures, although the helmet-like coiffure is executed in a more expressive manner. Certainly, this lower figure lacks the sombre and rather sinister qualities of the female head in the upper scheme, having more in common with the androgynous figure types to be found in Burne-Jones paintings of the period. The background detail is executed with similar care as can be seen on Plates 7.28 and 7.29. On the left-hand side of the composition, near the figure representing Aquarius, is the inscription: ‘DOULTON & Co. Lambeth’ and on the right-hand side: ‘W.J. Neatby Sculp. 1895’.

The mid 1890s was a time of considerable activity for Doulton’s architectural ceramics department, particularly in the area of sculptural decoration. At the same time as the firm was

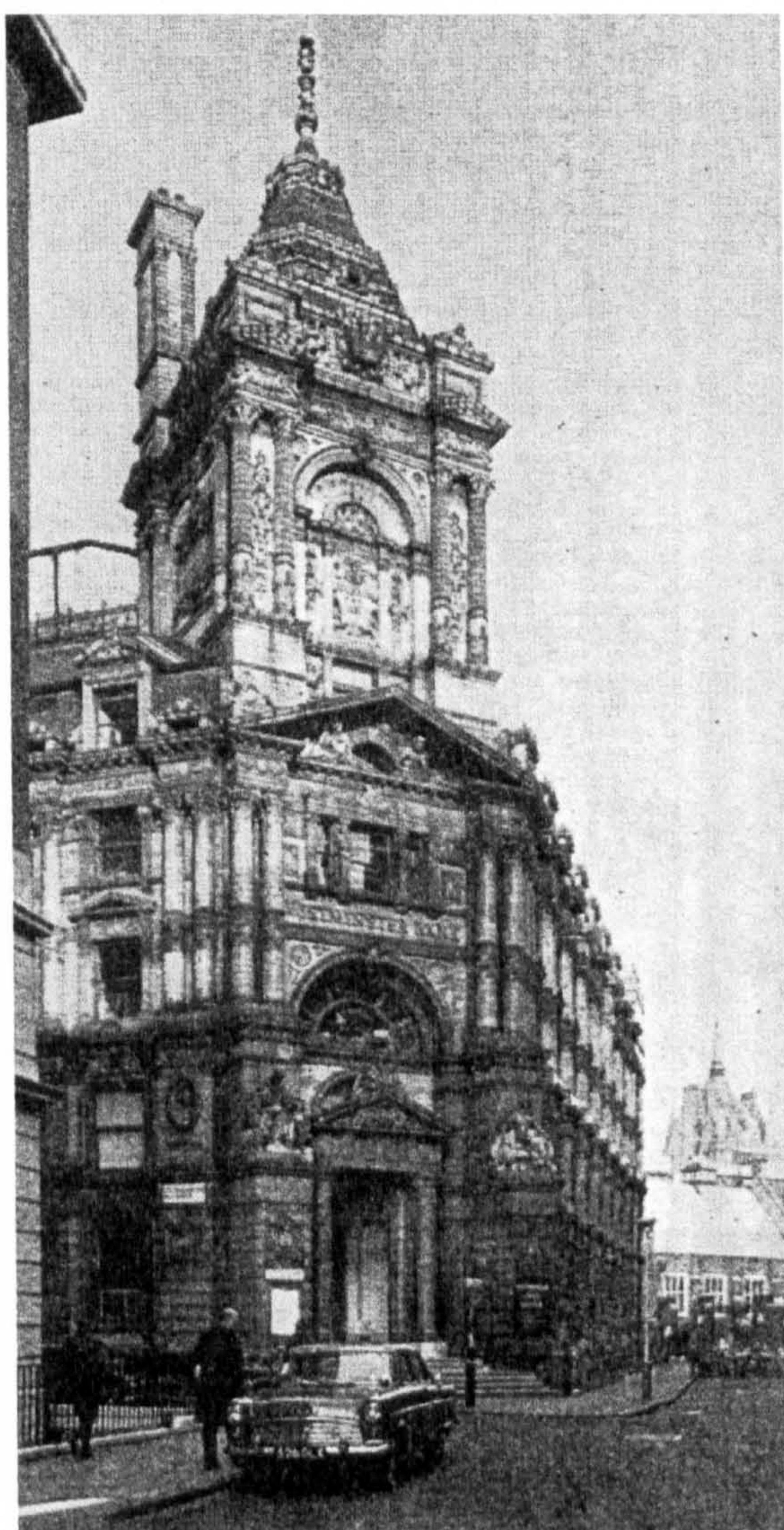


Plate 7.30. Birkbeck Bank, entrance and corner tower, T.E. Knightley. Photograph taken from the *Architectural Review*, 138 (1965), p. 339.

providing decorative elements for the Royal Observatory, another large contract was also underway in London. This was the Birkbeck Bank, Chancery Lane, London WC2, Plate 7.30, which was constructed in 1895-1902 and unfortunately demolished in 1965. In an article bemoaning the demolition of the building, Nicholas Taylor described the bank as ‘The greatest single extravaganza of central London’,²⁶ a view completely commensurate with an evocative account of the building as ‘....a gorgeous edifice adorned with rows of glittering blue columns and a corner entrance surmounted by tier upon tier of Rococo richness’, published in the 1940s.²⁷

The building, designed by the then aged High Victorian architect Thomas Edward Knightley (1823-1905), was executed in an extravagant Italian Renaissance style that must have seemed rather dated when it was completed in 1902. In fact the building had been designed several years before construction commenced, with the project having been exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1889. However, the bank incorporated a number of up-to-date construction features, notably a steel frame acting as a base for the extensive use of polychromatic ceramic components, which formed both interior and exterior building surfaces, and floors made of india rubber to prevent noise.

The exterior of the building and certain of the main ‘structural’ features of the interior were

²⁶ Taylor, N. : ‘Ceramic Extravagance’, *The Architectural Review*, cxxxviii (1965), p. 339.

²⁷ Westwood, B. and Brandon-Jones, N. : ‘The “Birkbeck” Bank’, *The Architect and Building News*, December 3rd (1948), p. 466.

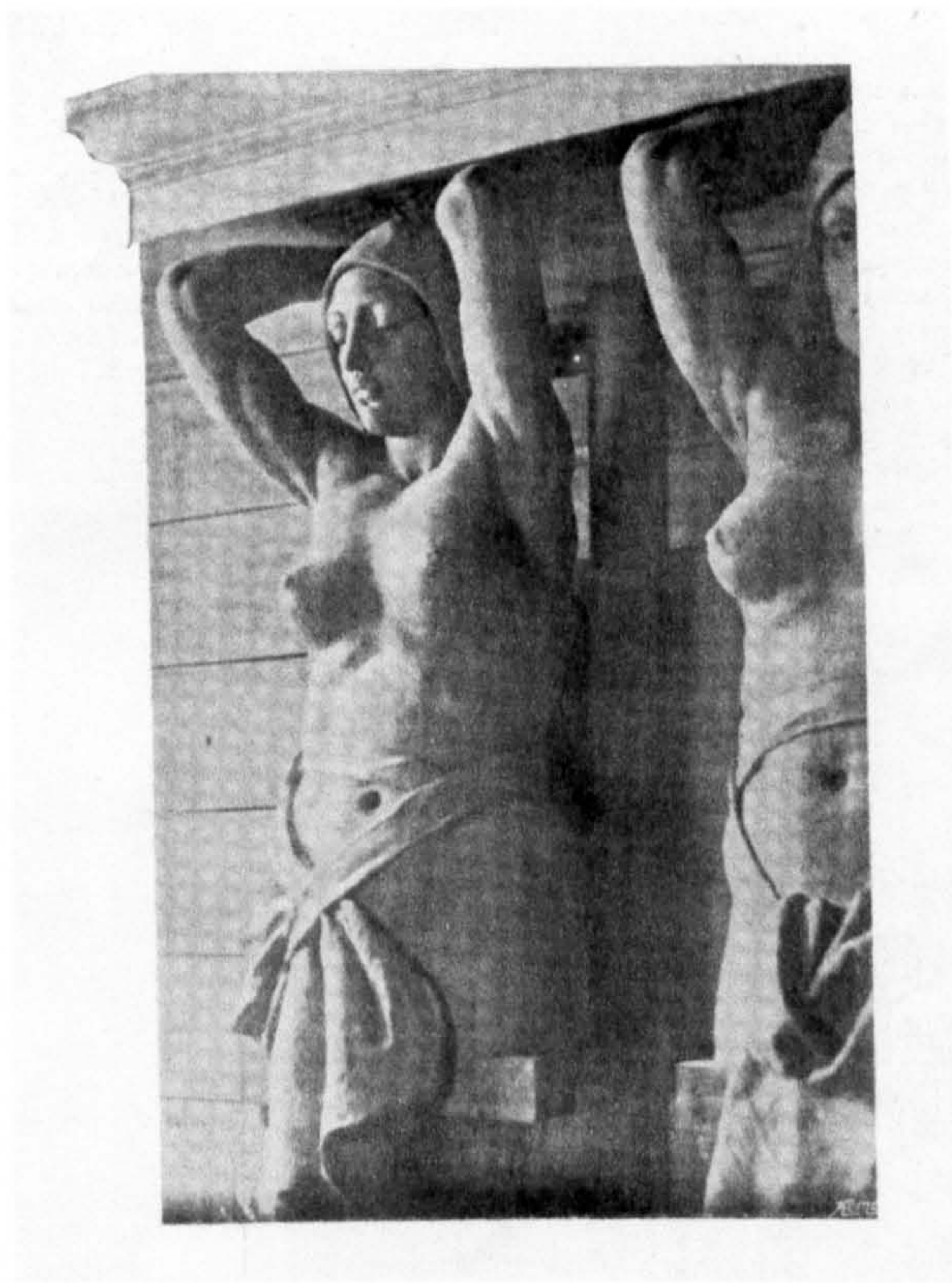


Plate 7.31. Caryatides in carraraware modelled by Neatby for the Birkbeck Bank, as published in the *Artist*, 1899.



Plate 7.32. Caryatides in carraraware modelled by Neatby for the Birkbeck Bank, as published in the *Studio*, 1903.

made from Doulton's matt-glazed polychrome Carraraware, while much of the interior was covered with glazed tiles produced by Boote and Co. This extensive building must have occupied the talents of numerous Doulton artists and modellers with both the inside and outside of the building making use of many decorative mouldings and even three-dimensional sculptures executed in Carraraware. Most of these, including sculpture groups and a series of large portrait busts in oval medallions were undertaken by the Doulton sculptor John Broad, but at the rear of the building was a series of Carraraware caryatides, grouped in pairs, executed by Neatby. Examples of these figures are published in both the *Artist* and the *Studio*, reproduced here as Plates 7.31 and 7.32, but in neither publication is the location of the sculptures recorded.²⁸ Equally, both reports are rather brief in their comments on these figures. The *Studio* praises Neatby's talents in the area of 'modelling for architectural statuary, in which he is an adept, as his terminal shaped Caryatides ... fully testify'. They continue: 'These figures are of heroic scale, executed in "Carrara ware", that is to say, terra-cotta with an eggshell surface enamel'. Commenting on the pair of Caryatides that it illustrates, the *Artist* says: '...we would rather have seen the expression of more effort on the part of the figures. These have a boldness of execution and disdain of petty finish which are absolute essentials in architectural work'. This latter comment echoes the description of a '...certain coarseness of texture', used by the same writer in connection with the Cornhill 'devil' mentioned above. Clearly, Neatby had firm ideas about the level of surface finish for architectural sculpture, particularly, it could be assumed, where the sculpture was situated relatively high up on a building facade. However,

²⁸ Vallance, Aymer : 'Mr W.J. Neatby and His Work', *Studio*, xxix (1903), p.116; 'W.J. Neatby's work and a new process', *The Artist*, xxv (1899), p. 89.

in neither of the published photographs of the Caryatides is this lack of finish obvious. Fortunately, parts of three of the statues survive and are now in the possession of Royal Doulton.²⁹ Each figure is made of buff-coloured terracotta covered in a milky, translucent Carraraware glaze and carries the marks: 'Doulton 1895' and the signature 'W. J. Neatby'. One complete specimen, on its pedestal, measures approximately 7 feet tall. The figures are hollow and were presumably hand-finished after being moulded. On close inspection the reviewer's comments about a 'disdain of petty finish' become explicable for the sculptures appear to be rather crudely finished although the overall design and modelling is powerful.

In conception, the Birkbeck Bank sculptures owe much to the vigorous ideas of the English New Sculpture Movement, with its adaptation of Continental attitudes towards three-dimensional representations learned largely from French Salon artists and 16th-century Italian works. The latter were noticeably influential in the works designed by the English sculptor Alfred Stevens (1817-75), who studied in Rome for ten years in the 1830s-early 1840s, and who, it has been suggested, is one of the seminal figures for the English New Sculpture Movement.³⁰ Neatby may well have been familiar with Stevens's figures executed for the *Wellington Monument* (1857-75), in St Paul's Cathedral and assimilated his Italianate style. In particular the strong sculptural forms suggest the influence of Italian Renaissance masters, and especially Michelangelo's (1475-1564) *Dying Slave* figure (1513-16) for the tomb of Pope Julius II. In addition to the strong formal modelling, which imbues Neatby's figures with a

²⁹ These figures were not available for photography at the time of writing.

³⁰ Beattie, S.: *The New Sculpture* (London : 1983), Chap. 1.

latent masculinity, his caryatides share the same erotic languor as Michelangelo's work.

Edmund Gosse, in his paper defining and cataloguing the achievements of the New Sculpture Movement, published in the *Art Journal* in 1894³¹, placed the origins of the new phenomenon squarely with the French school of the previous generation while in a review produced in 1997, Robert Upstone identified three influences on the Movement: contemporary French sculpture; bronze sculpture produced in Renaissance Florence; the paintings of Edward Burne-Jones (1833-98) and G.F. Watts (1817-1904)³². Gosse's analysis of New Sculpture described a vitality in both form and finish in the works that distinguished it from the archaic stoicism of British 19th-century sculpture in the Classical idiom and the somewhat pedestrian creations of finely-detailed Gothic inspired works of sculptors such as the pre-Raphaelite, Thomas Woolner (1825-92). However, at the core of Gosse's admiration for the New Sculpture was his love of naturalism and fine detail, attributes which he judged to be acquired from contemporary French sculptures. His commentary fails to recognize the importance of Italian Renaissance works, a failure largely born out of a personal dismissal of Italian sculpture of his own day, and the influence of fine artists. Essentially, he fails to attach any importance to concepts of Symbolism in New Sculpture, ignoring the presence in the figure types and subject matter, used by exponents of the movement, that were well established in the Symbolist works of painters such as G.F. Watts by the 1890s. Admittedly, Gosse's article appeared before the creation of works

³¹ Gosse, E.: 'The New Sculpture 1879-1894', *Art Journal*, New Series (1894), pp. 138-142, 199-203, 277-282 and 306-311.

³² Upstone, R.: 'Symbolism in three dimensions', in Wilton, A. and Upstone, R. (Eds.): *The Age of Rossetti, Burne -Jones and Watts - Symbolism in Britain 1860-1910* (London : Tate Gallery Publishing, 1997), pp. 83-92.

such as George Frampton's (1860-1928) *Lamia* (1899-1900), or Albert Toft's (1862-1949) *Spirit of Contemplation* (1899-1900)³³, both of which rely upon the melancholic introspection so commonly found in Symbolist paintings for their gravity, but his ineptitude in perceiving the connecting between the various elements of the fine arts is lamentable. Characteristically, in the same article, he also construed the demise of the New Sculpture Movement, seeing it as a spent force, when, in fact, many of the great works of the Movement were still to be conceived.

The Gosse article in the *Art Journal* and the discussion above are relevant to the consideration of Neatby's Birkbeck Bank caryatides. In these figures Neatby eschews fine detail and minute surface effects, rejecting the very basics that, for Gosse, characterized New Sculpture. Instead, Neatby employed strong modelling and an expressive, almost coarse, surface to inject a strength and vigour into his forms. This could be considered an accidental result of the materials used, but elsewhere his formal modelling in terracotta, even when covered in a Carraraware coating, is usually executed with noticeable delicacy. Undoubtedly, the style of both the caryatides and the Cornhill 'devils' was the result of calculated artistic expression. If Gosse's criteria are to be considered to define New Sculpture then Neatby's caryatides fall outside the movement for they owe little to the refined naturalistic French Salon style that he so admired. However, later writers on the subject such as Upstone and Benedict Read³⁴, as is suggested above, have identified other constituents in the work of the movement, especially high Renaissance forms and the influence of Symbolism. Read, in a passage discussing the

³³ Beattie, S.: *The New Sculpture* (London : 1983), Pls. 155 and 176.

³⁴ Read, B.: *Victorian Sculpture* (London : Yale University Press, 1982).

various influences on the sculptors within the movement, readily identifies ‘a certain tendency towards spiritualistic, perhaps slightly ethereal, misty subject matter in some quarters of the New Sculpture’³⁵. Neatby’s figures rely on just such concepts to communicate ideas of strength and tireless patience, displaying obvious symbolic references not only to Classical prototypes but also to a mysterious Antique world.

Having argued for a place for Neatby’s sculptures within the overall *avant-garde milieu* of Late Victorian sculpture, it must be stressed that his work exist only on its fringe. Unlike Neatby, who was self taught, for most of the notable sculptors of the movement a formal sculptural education was an important part of their careers. Virtually all of those who rose to the top of their profession attended either the Royal Academy Schools or the National Art Training School at South Kensington. In addition Alfred Gilbert (1854-1934), George Frampton (1860-1928), Alfred Drury (1856-1944) and Frederick Pomeroy (1856-1924) among others, all spent time studying in France. Neatby, by comparison, did not even correspond to the model of mason-carver turned artist so familiar during the earlier part of the 19th century.

In terms of the overall aesthetic of the Movement, the readiness to create new effects through the use of new or neglected materials can be said to have encompassed Neatby’s work. Many of the finest works in the new style were in bronze³⁶, but the last two decades of the 19th

³⁵ *Ibid*, p, 321.

³⁶ Marble was also used but was less favoured by the New Sculpture Movement than it had been by sculptors working in a Classical style earlier in the century. Plaster remained an important medium for exhibition works as it had been earlier.

century also witnessed a vastly increased use of terracotta for both interior and exterior sculptural work, particularly in an architectural context. Sculptors such as Alfred Drury, who was closest to Dalou having been his studio assistant in Paris (1881-85), and Roscoe Mullins (1848-1907) eagerly embraced the use of terracotta, providing the material with a new aesthetic sense of *chic*. Doulton was quick to take advantage of this situation and employed *avant-garde* sculptors such as W.S. Frith (1850-1924) and Pomeroy on prestigious architectural projects that included decorative sculpture. Neatby therefore worked in an environment where new ideas were current and, as can be seen from his own creations, persuasive. Unfortunately, however influenced Neatby was by new trends, ultimately his sculptural work was but one of his responsibilities. He was not an independent artist but rather a commercial designer whose sculptural works, however accomplished, were individual experiments with new ideas rather than part of a continuing evolution of a personal style. The Birkbeck Bank caryatides represent the pinnacle of Neatby's achievements in three-dimensional sculpture although, as is recorded below, his more numerous creations in bas-relief are of equal or higher quality³⁷.

In 1896 Neatby executed one of his best known decorative schemes: the painted tile entrance arcade to the Blackpool Winter Gardens, together with a series of designs for relief moulded faience panels that were used in the Grand Hall of the same complex. The work was part of a building project designed by the Manchester based architects Mangnall and Littlewood and won

³⁷ The first part of this statement may be qualified by the unfortunate fact that few of Neatby's sculptures in-the-round have survived. Other works, now lost, may have been superior to the caryatides described here.

in competition against four other architects.³⁸ Doulton supplied the faience for the interior and Neatby, as the head of their architectural ceramics department, supplied the designs. Indeed, considering the nature and execution of the designs for ceramic decoration within the building it is almost certain that the architects had little input into the scheme other than perhaps to suggest the overall theme.

Artistically, the most important area for Neatby's work was the main entrance arcade which led, eventually to the Grand Hall. For this entrance he created a series of twenty-eight painted tiled panels³⁹ alternating with large mirrors to form a novel arrangement which Barnard described thus:

‘Twenty-eight panels formed an arcade for the main entrance, with life-size pictures of girls in Pre-Raphaelite costumes. A mirror was set between two panels in each bay; two mirrors, on opposite sides, gave the impression of an ‘arcade’ at right-angles to the thoroughfare, with an infinite number of reflections’⁴⁰.

The basic arrangement of these components can be seen in Plate 7.33 and examples of the individual painted panels in Plates 7.34 - 7.40. In its review of the work the *British Architect*

³⁸ ‘The Blackpool Winter Gardens’, *British Architect*, xlv (1896) pp. 163;165-166.

³⁹ This number is disputed, and is given as ‘a series of twenty-seven panels’ in ‘W.J. Neatby's work and a new process’, *The Artist*, xxv (1899), p. 94. Due to changes of use within the building, only fourteen of these panels are now thought to survive, hidden behind various false walls.

⁴⁰ Barnard, Julian : *Victorian Ceramic Tiles* (London : Studio Vista, 1972), p. 129.



Plate 7.33. Blackpool Winter Gardens, Neatby handpainted tile figures in main entrance corridor.
Photograph: courtesy of First Leisure Corporation plc.

had the following words:

‘The 28 circular-beaded painted tile panels on the walls of this corridor will of course form its most striking feature and its principal attraction. These have been designed and entirely painted by the artist, Mr. W.J. Neatby, of Messrs. Doulton’s, and it is felt that these decorative panels strike a somewhat novel line for this class of work. Instead of following the beaten track and making use of the traditional subjects for such work Mr. Neatby has taken the names and colours of the various precious stones as the key-notes and titles to the various panels, relieving these with a few panels bearing titles of birds. With these as his *motif* the artist has let his fancy have the widest range in all the decorative details of his various subjects, limited only by the general conditions of scale and harmonious treatment. The range of colour employed is both wide and rich, and the artist has imparted to the 28 panels such charms of form and colour as will well repay a careful inspection’⁴¹.

The scheme of decoration devised by Neatby for this project appears to be the first in which he produced a major sequence of mural paintings for Doulton; certainly it is the earliest extant scheme. It marked an important progression in his personal stylistic development as an artist, setting patterns for the future and allowing him to exercise his graphic skills and perhaps to realize where his own strengths were located. The overall concept for the work, the subject

⁴¹ ‘The Blackpool Winter Gardens’, *British Architect*, xlv (1896) p. 165.



Plate 7.34. Blackpool Winter Gardens, *Jacinth* designed by Neatby. Photograph: the Artist, xxv (1899).

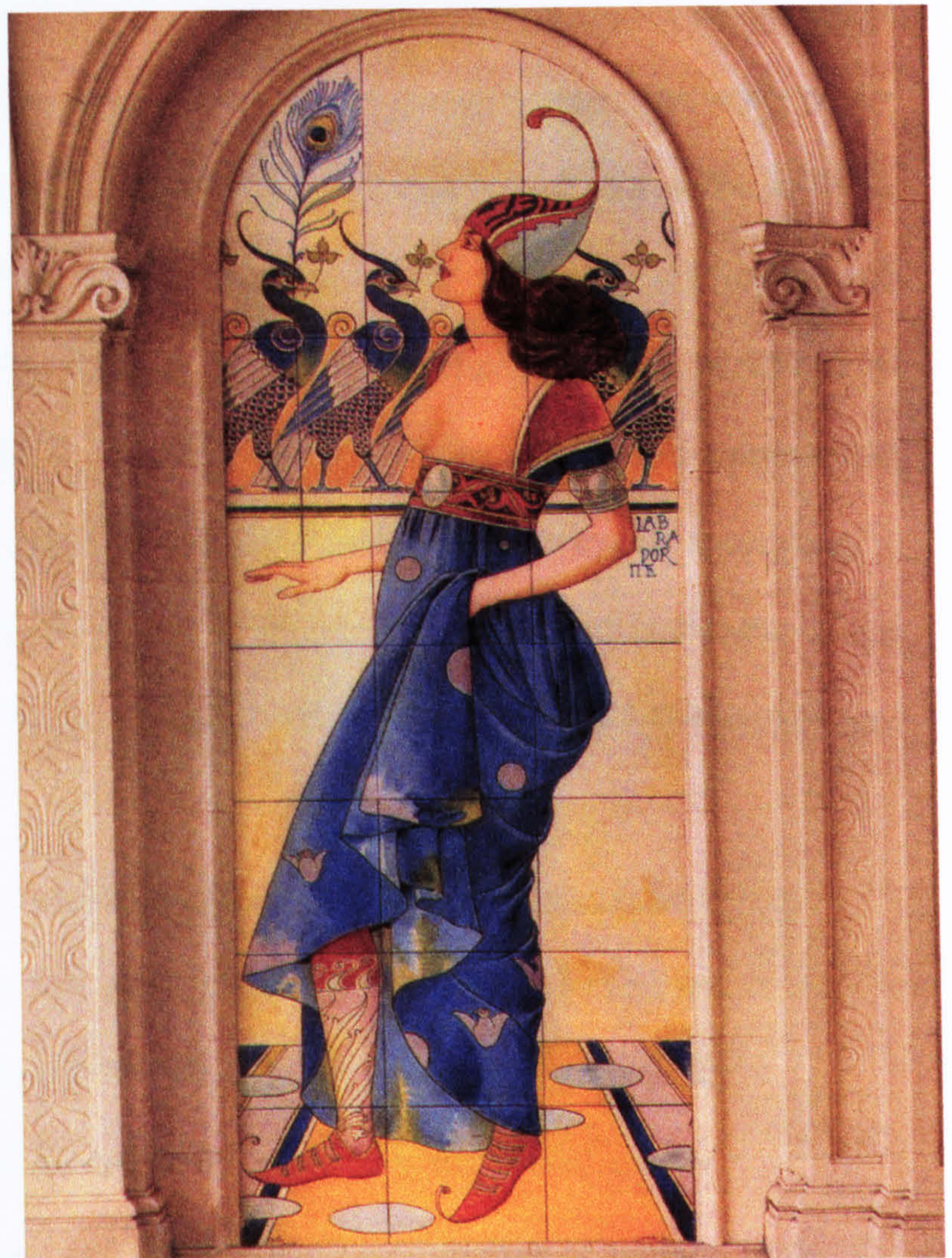


Plate 7.35. Blackpool Winter Gardens, *Labradorite* designed by Neatby. Photograph: courtesy of First Leisure Corporation plc.

matter, use of colour and technique of execution are all of importance for a detailed consideration of this scheme and the passages quoted above reveal a great deal that can assist such an analysis.

In the description given above Barnard draws attention to the unusual arrangement of confronting mirrors and painted tile panels and the infinite reflections created by this rather original juxtaposition of visual elements, and in the *British Architect* report the writer points out Neatby's avoidance of traditional ideas and even uses the word 'novel' to describe it. These statements suggest an attitude to the work on behalf of the artist. In a seaside town, in what was essentially a Victorian palace of delights, this was not serious art as might be defined by contemporary fine artists, nor was it meant to be. The mirrors, style, colours and female forms suggest that this was the Victorian equivalent of a present-day Disneyland experience ⁴²! Barnard's suggestion that the girls painted in the panels are dressed in Pre-Raphaelite costumes, while not being wholly inaccurate, may well miss the point. In a following passage, he says:

'Neatby's treatment of the subject, although showing a keen appreciation for Art Nouveau and the work of the Pre-Raphaelite painters, reveals an independence in his style that gently mocks at both. The essence of the 'aesthetic' costume in the 1880s, was the long swirling draperies and the haphazard combination of clothes,

⁴² The girl shown in the tile panel Plate 7.39 bears a striking resemblance to Walt Disney's *Snow White* character.

preferably with some naturalistic ornament. This Neatby developed to the point of burlesque: with the aesthetic peacock feathers and Byzantine decoration, he makes reference to most of the ideas that were current at the time'⁴³.

Undoubtedly, Neatby was much influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites, but here, Barnard's use of the word 'burlesque' may be more apposite. The pseudo-medieval costumes worn by the girls are enhanced by occasional ethereal, mysterious and even theatrical elements - essentially they are fancy party frocks. As such, within a complex which boasted two theatres as well as a large ballroom, they have much more relevance to the amateur theatrical 'masques' that were a popular form of entertainment in the late 19th-early 20th century⁴⁴. These masques were frequently staged in medieval costume and attracted the talents of a number of professional artists and designers who worked on sets and costumes. The latter were particularly fanciful and could appear somewhat similar to the dress used in Neatby's Blackpool Winter Garden designs. A watercolour by Walter Crane, *The Apotheosis of Italian Art*, painted in 1885-86, records a *tableau vivant* organized by Crane to commemorate the reorganisation of the

⁴³ Barnard, Julian : *Victorian Ceramic Tiles* (London : Studio Vista, 1972), p. 129.

⁴⁴ A good example of a script for a masque, with rather 'artistic' illustrations for settings and costumes, the latter being long flowing draperies although of a simple undecorated form to allow for the exigencies of 'artistic' woodcut printing, can be found in Robertson, W. Graham: *A Masque of May Morning* (London : John Lane The Bodley Head, 1904). A selection of exotic costumes, similar to those worn by Neatby's figures, produced for a masque organized by the Glasgow School of Art in 1903, can be seen in Burkhauser, J. : *Glasgow Girls - Women in Art and Design 1880-1920* (Edinburgh : Canongate Publishing, 1990), Fig. 72.



Plate 7.36. Blackpool Winter Gardens, figure with scroll, designed by Neatby. Photograph: courtesy of First Leisure Corporation plc.



Plate 7.37. Blackpool Winter Gardens, dancing figure, designed by Neatby. Photograph: courtesy of First Leisure Corporation plc.



Plate 7.38. Blackpool Winter Gardens, *Sapphire* figure designed by Neatby. Photograph: courtesy of First Leisure Corporation plc.

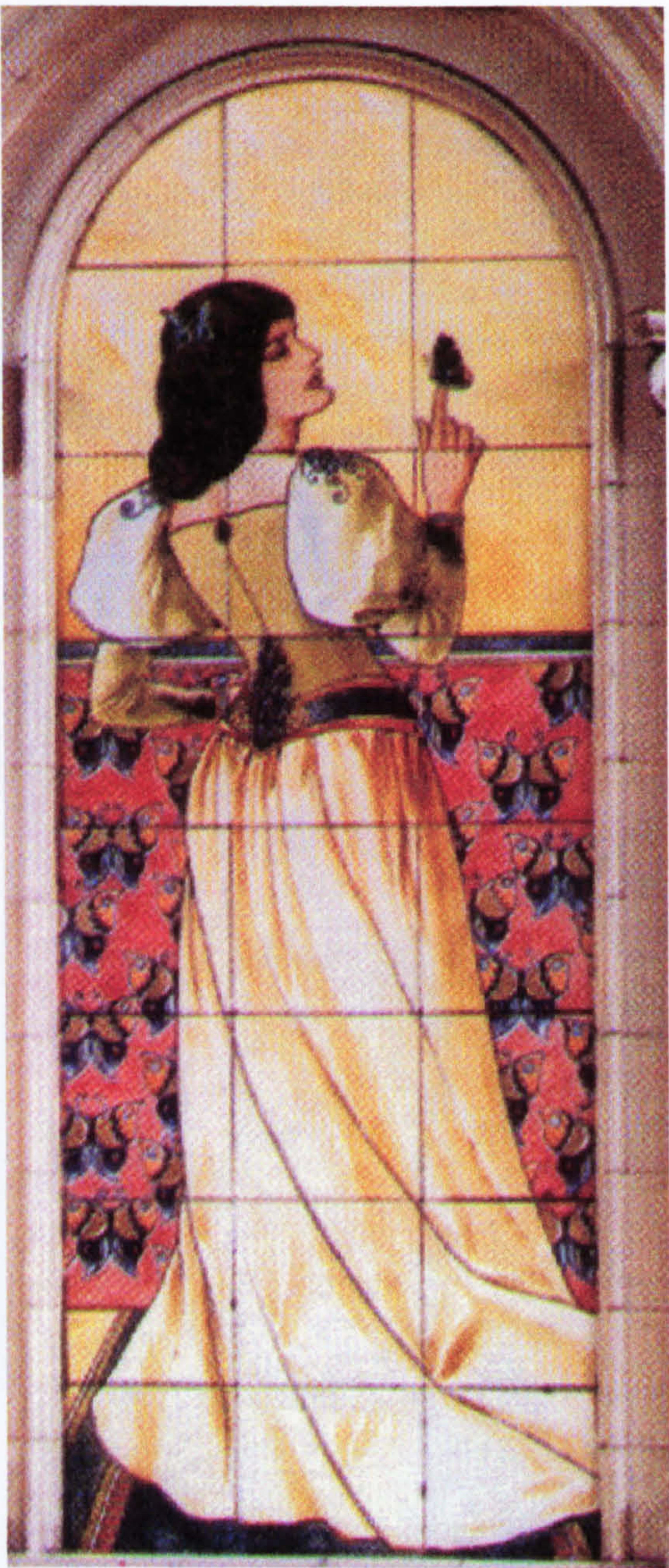


Plate 7.39. Blackpool Winter Gardens, figure designed by Neatby. Photograph: courtesy of First Leisure Corporation plc.



Plate 7.40. Blackpool Winter Gardens, *Peacock* figure designed by Neatby. Photograph: courtesy of First Leisure Corporation plc.

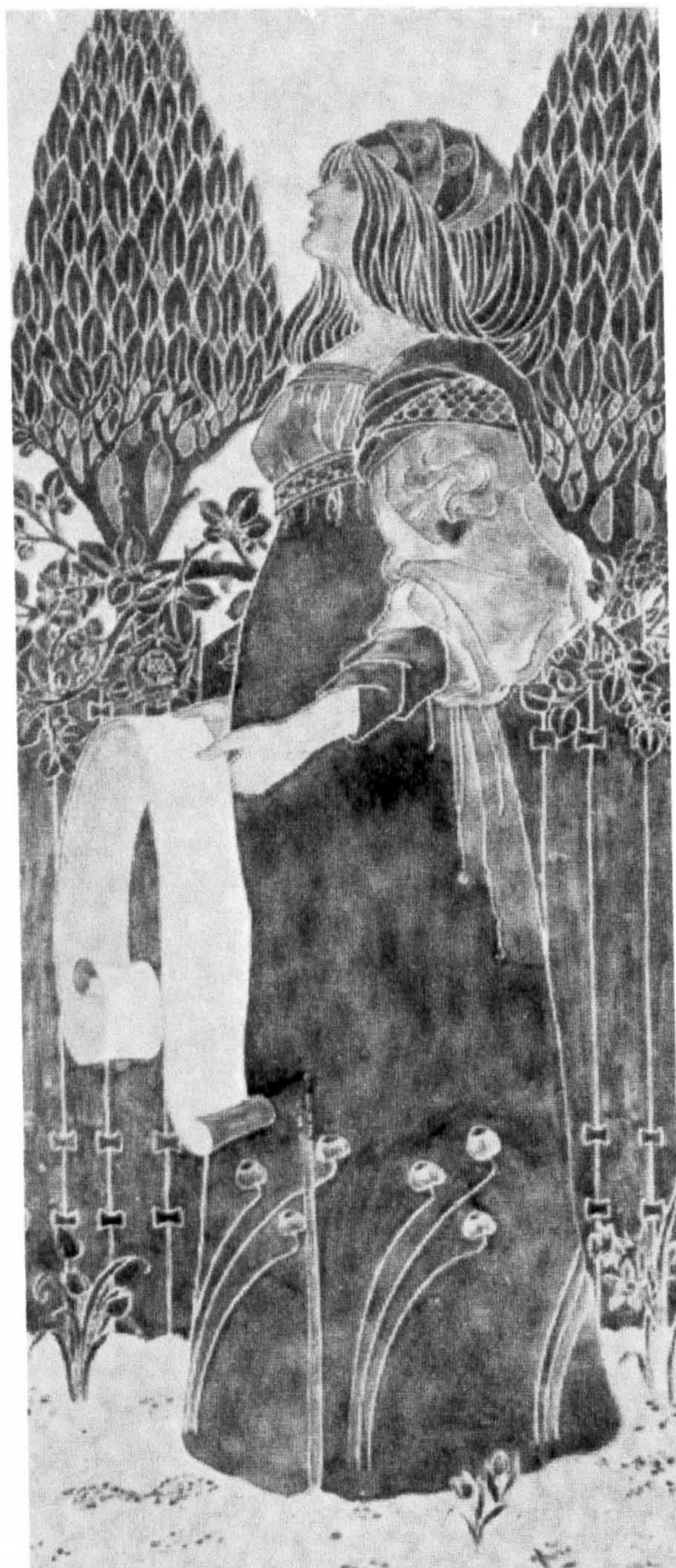


Plate 7.41. *Garden Song*, in coloured plaster by Neatby, as published in the *Artist* (1899).

Institute of Painters in Watercolour in 1885⁴⁵. The feat of amateur dramatics recorded in the picture was based on a lavish portrayal of medieval costume and architecture, with the painting showing small groups of people in position both in front of and within an arcade of three round-headed arches that betray an uncanny resemblance to those in the Winter Gardens entrance. The costume of the female participants is also similar to that illustrated by Neatby. Crane's painting was exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1886 and may have provided the inspiration for the tile panels, although it is only one of a number of works in a similar vein dating to the last two decades of the century.

One further derivation, although not unconnected to the discussion above, might be suggested for Neatby's figure types. In a review of Neatby's work published in 1899, the *Artist* illustrates a coloured plaster panel entitled *Garden Song*, said to have been executed by the artist some fifteen years previously. The panel, illustrated here as Plate 7.41, shows a single standing female figure enclosed within a closely confined spatial area, with a background to figure ratio of similar proportion to those of the Blackpool figures. The *Garden Song* figure is rather static in contrast to most of the later series of figures, but like them she stands at the front of the picture in a shallow foreground that allows little room for spatial recession. All the figures stand in front of a waist-high dado, although in the case of the plaster panel figure the dado is replaced by a comparable garden fence; above this barrier the background is usually patterned with a variety of decorative motifs or, in the earlier work, stylized trees. The compositional

⁴⁵ The painting, signed and dated 1885-6, and now in the possession of the Manchester City Art Galleries, is illustrated and described in Smith, G. and Hyde, S. (Eds.), *Walter Crane 1845-1915: Artist, Designer and Socialist* (London : Lund Humphries, 1989), Pl. E1, and pp. 112-113.

technique is essentially a simple one created from two basic picture planes, a foreground and a background, and is closely connected to conventions employed in the formulation of 18th and 19th-century Japanese wood-block prints, a format developed for the European taste in the 1860s and 1870s most notably, in England, by the painter Albert Moore (1841-93). To consider more specific points of similarity between the *Garden Song* figure and the others, her stance is echoed by both the figures *Jacinth* and *Labradorite* (Plates 7.34 and 7.35) and another figure Plate 7.36, like her, carries a scroll.

It would seem that, if the dating proposed for the *Garden Song* is correct, from as early as the mid 1880s Neatby had developed a basic format for single full-length figure types⁴⁶. Once the model had been established Neatby merely changed the pose, altered the costume and added the differing decorative background motifs. As regards individual decorative motifs, leaf shape and the form of the trees displayed in the *Garden Song* illustrate an early adoption of forms that were to appear in the works of several artists and designers in the 1890s as part of the visual language of English New Art. The initial derivation of the tree shape used would appear to be from Islamic art. Walter Crane, in the late 1870s, used similar tree forms in his design for a mosaic frieze that he designed for the Arab Hall at Leighton House, where they complemented the Islamic tiles that lined the walls. Twenty years later, stylized tree motifs had become a feature of the design work of numerous artists including C.F.A. Voysey, George Frampton, C. Harrison Townsend (1851-1928) and a host of lesser names. A good example

⁴⁶ Compare this format with his single figure tile designs created for Burmantofts and illustrated above as Plates 6.2-6.4.



Plate 7.42. Burmantofts Dragon vase, c.1900.

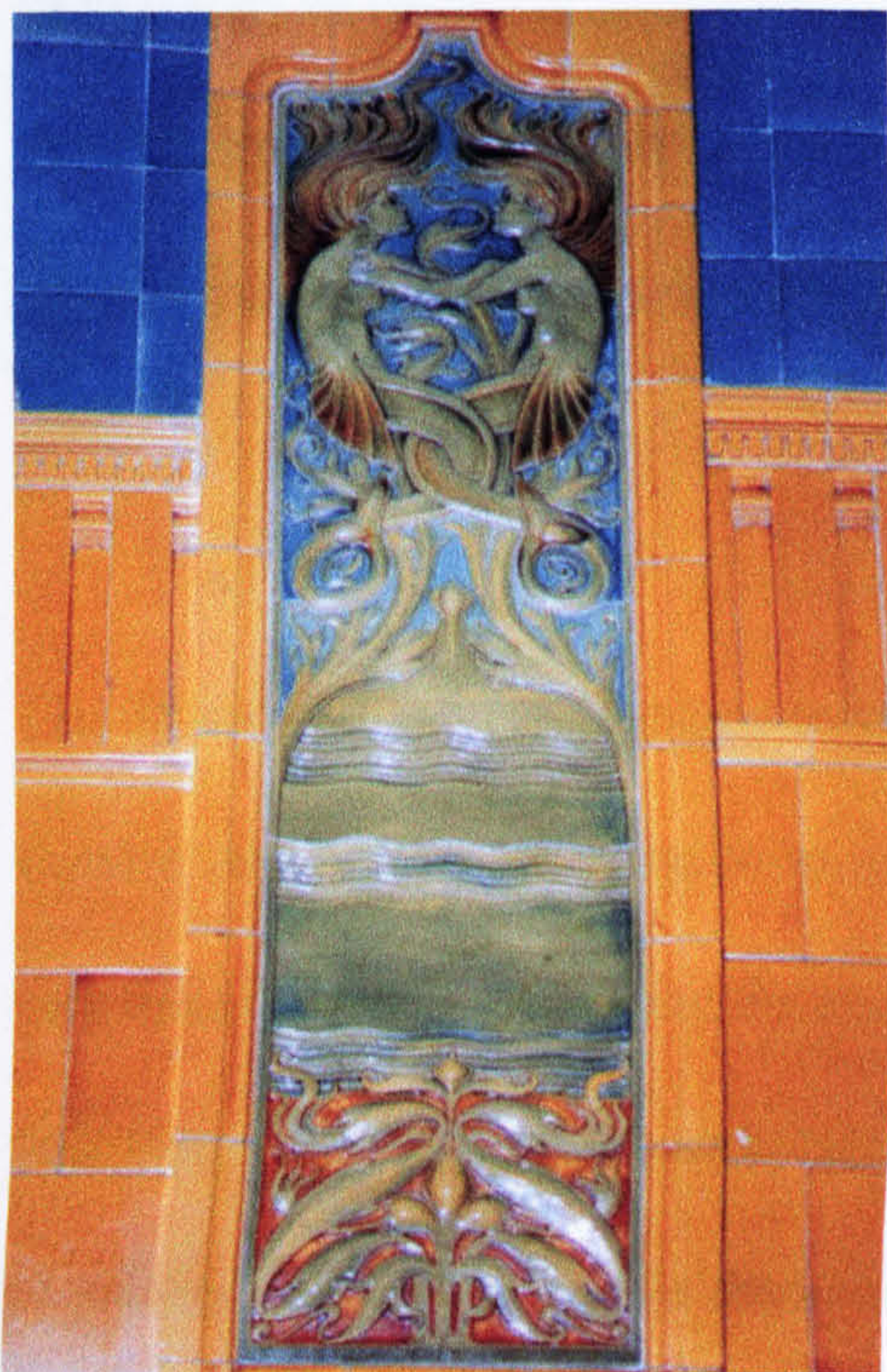


Plate 7.43. Blackpool Winter Gardens, tile panel in the Ballroom.

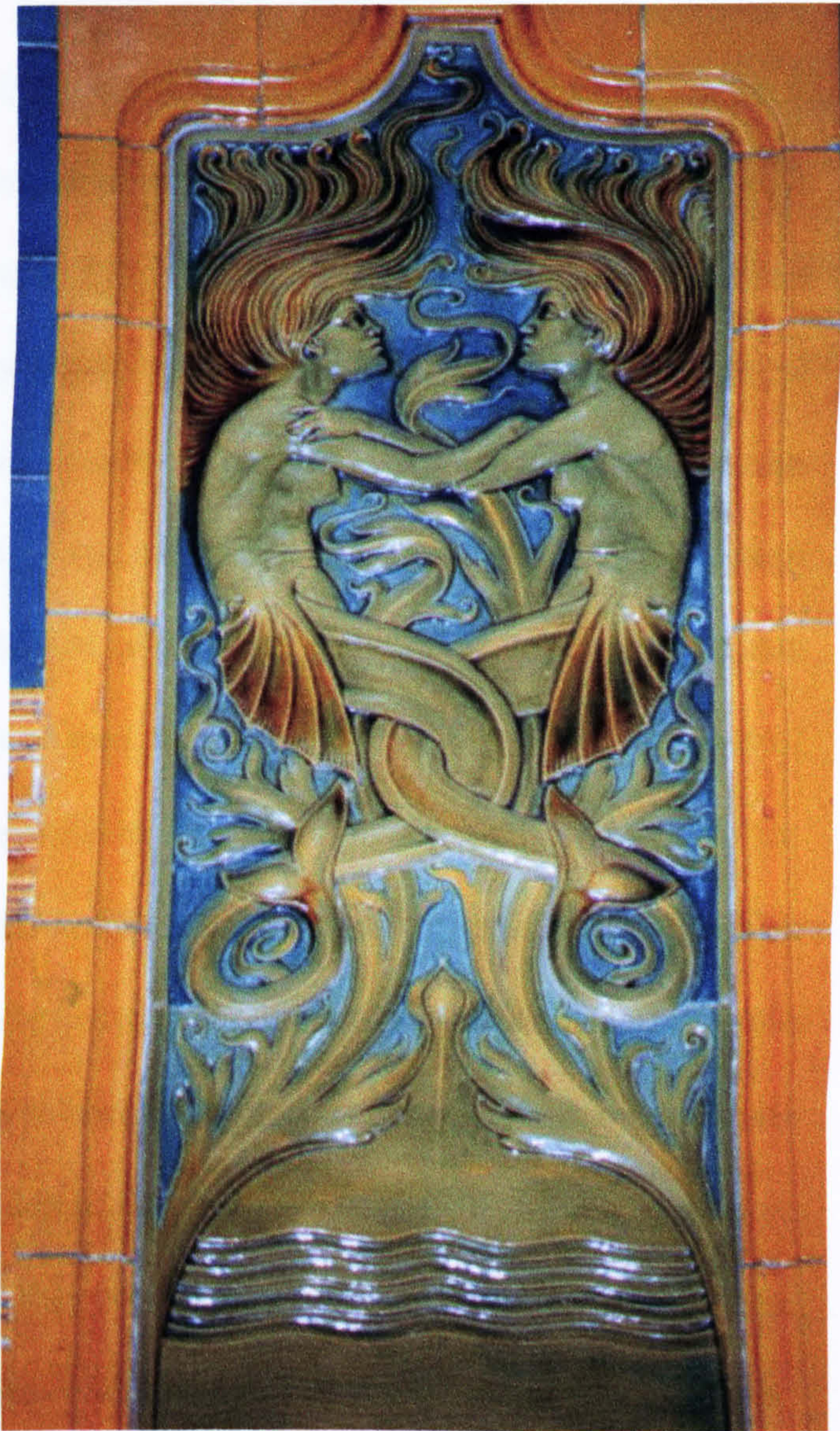


Plate 7.44. Detail of Mermaids tile panel designed by Neatby.

of its use by an unknown commercial designer can be seen in Plate 7.42. Other motifs used on the Blackpool panels, such as heart shapes and birds and the overall reliance on curvilinear forms reinforces the impression that Neatby has been influenced by Continental Art Nouveau style.

The Blackpool Winter Gardens entrance scheme seems, therefore, to find its inspiration in theatre, and represents some form of masque relating to precious stones and birds, which in turn themselves may symbolize the exoticism of the thespian world. However, the ‘girls’ were only part of the design work undertaken by Neatby within the complex. In addition to a number of painted tile ceiling panels depicting sea creatures⁴⁷, none of which remain extant, he also designed a relief-moulded panel for use on the pilasters in the main ballroom. The design illustrates two confronting mermaids entwined with foliage above three zones of horizontal wavy lines and a stylized sea plant. As can be seen in Plates 7.43-7.44 the panels were part of a tile scheme for the lower parts of the walls of the ballroom which employed turquoise coloured tiles above a honey-coloured tile dado. The relief-moulded mermaid panels, of which many survive, were coloured in a similar palette and in form show Neatby’s willingness to use curvilinear art nouveau style. The Blackpool ballroom decorations appear to mark the first time that Neatby used mermaids as a principal design element. Presumably they were chosen here because Blackpool was a seaside resort, but they became part of Neatby’s repertoire and were used on later projects such as the Halford Street Wholesale Market entrance arch in Leicester.

⁴⁷ ‘The Blackpool Winter Gardens’, *British Architect*, xlv (1896) p. 168.

The year 1896 witnessed two further recorded architectural projects by Neatby: Pagani's Restaurant, 42-48 Great Portland Street, London W1 and the Redfern Gallery, 26-27 Conduit Street, London W1. Messrs. Pagani's Restaurant, designed by Charles H. Worley and illustrated in Plate 7.45, a sketch by T. Raffles Davison, consisted of a plain facade for residential properties above the ornate restaurant frontage composed of coloured Carraraware. The *British Architect* points out the cherubs, that sit at the corners of the facade at frieze level, the sculpted grotesque heads that form the keystones of the arches and the moulded arch terminals as being the work of Neatby, but the overall concept for the restaurant front, particularly the arrangement of colour for the Carraraware blocks, must also have been his work. The Davison sketch gives no idea of the effect that the colour of the facade must have made on contemporary observers but it was commented upon approvingly at the time⁴⁸.

This building, destroyed in the Second World War, offers few opportunities for analysis. The overall form of the restaurant facade appears typically Victorian and could easily have been produced in stone or glazed faience. However, in the choice of Carraraware as the building material Worley was employing a product that was still very much at the cutting edge of architectural ceramic technology. Both its colour and texture were admired by the *British Architect* reviewer and it offered a novel departure from the otherwise uninspiring facade above. Although Worley probably designed the overall form of the deeply arched structure, the positioning of the various different coloured ceramic components will have been the work of Neatby and his staff at Doulton's, no doubt with the suggestion for individual moulded

⁴⁸ 'Messrs. Pagani's Restaurant', *British Architect*, xlv (1896), p. 130; illustrations on pp. 128-131.

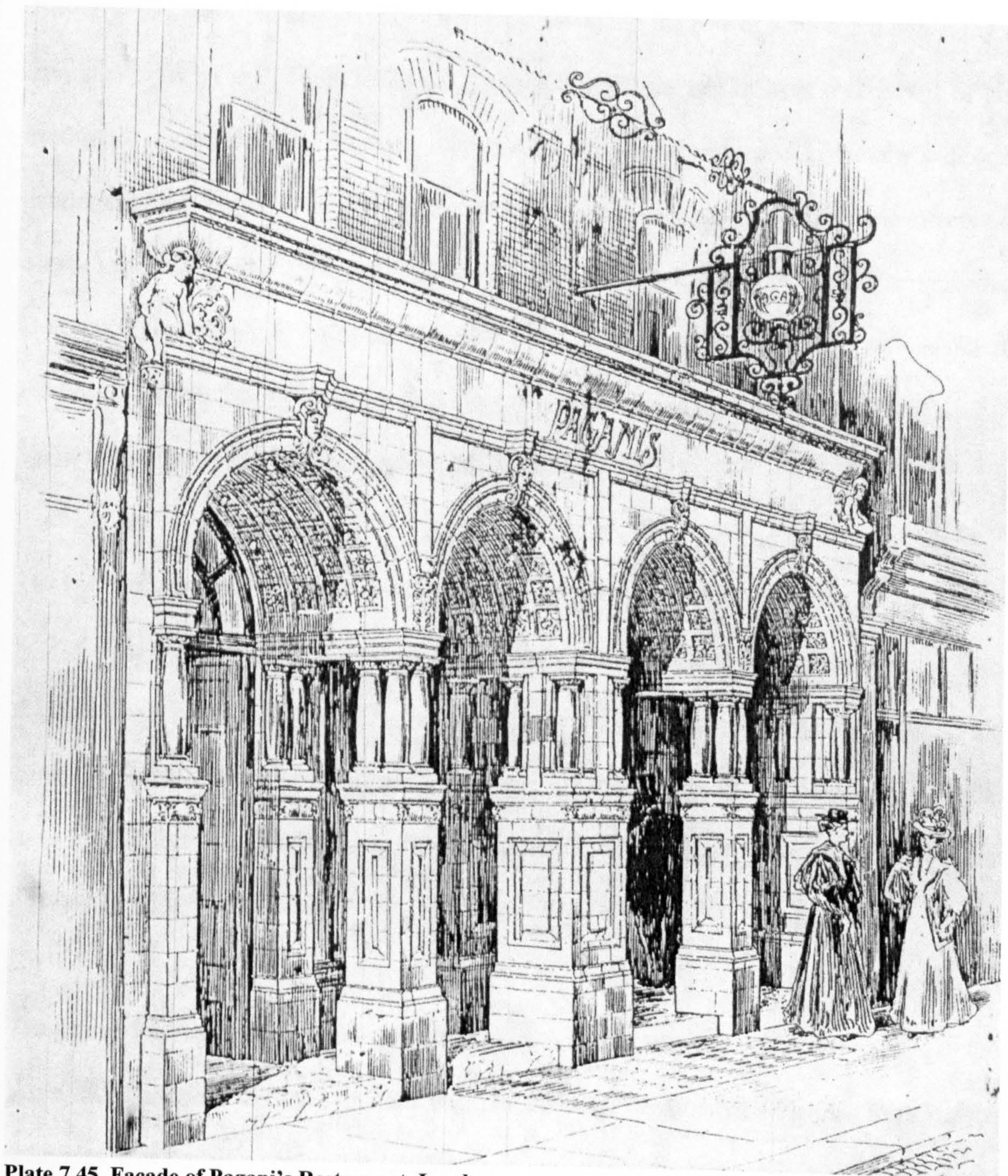


Plate 7.45. Facade of Pagani's Restaurant, London.

decorative elements. The design of the cherubs, although in the round, echo some of Neatby's bas-relief work of the 1880s, while the grotesque keystone masks were a firm part of his established repertoire. The building may not be seen as an advance in Neatby's design development but Pagani's did offer him the opportunity to work with polychromatic effects on a relatively small scale. This was not the first time that he had worked with Carraraware, Doulton's had developed the material in 1888, and Neatby had been involved with its use at the Birkbeck Bank, but this rather small project must have been influential in a series of similar Carraraware facades that he designed in 1898-1900⁴⁹.

The last building from 1896 to be discussed here is the Redfern Gallery, London. In their book *The Doulton Story*, Atterbury and Irvine claim that this building displayed decoration by both the sculptor G. Elmes and Neatby. Unfortunately, the quoted source for their information, the *British Architect*, mentions only Elmes⁵⁰. However, stylistically many of the decorative motifs used on the facade of the building are characteristic of Neatby's work and are therefore discussed, albeit briefly, below.

The former Redfern Gallery building, designed by A.H. Kersey, still exists, although only the upper stories survive in their original state. The building, designed in a Flemish Renaissance style, typical of Kersey's designs for London town houses and mansion flats, rises impressively over Conduit Street to an asymmetrically placed gable, which was originally topped by a heavy

⁴⁹ For example the Fox and Anchor public house in London.

⁵⁰ 'Messrs. Redfern's', *British Architect*, xlv (1896), p. 130; illustration p. 129.

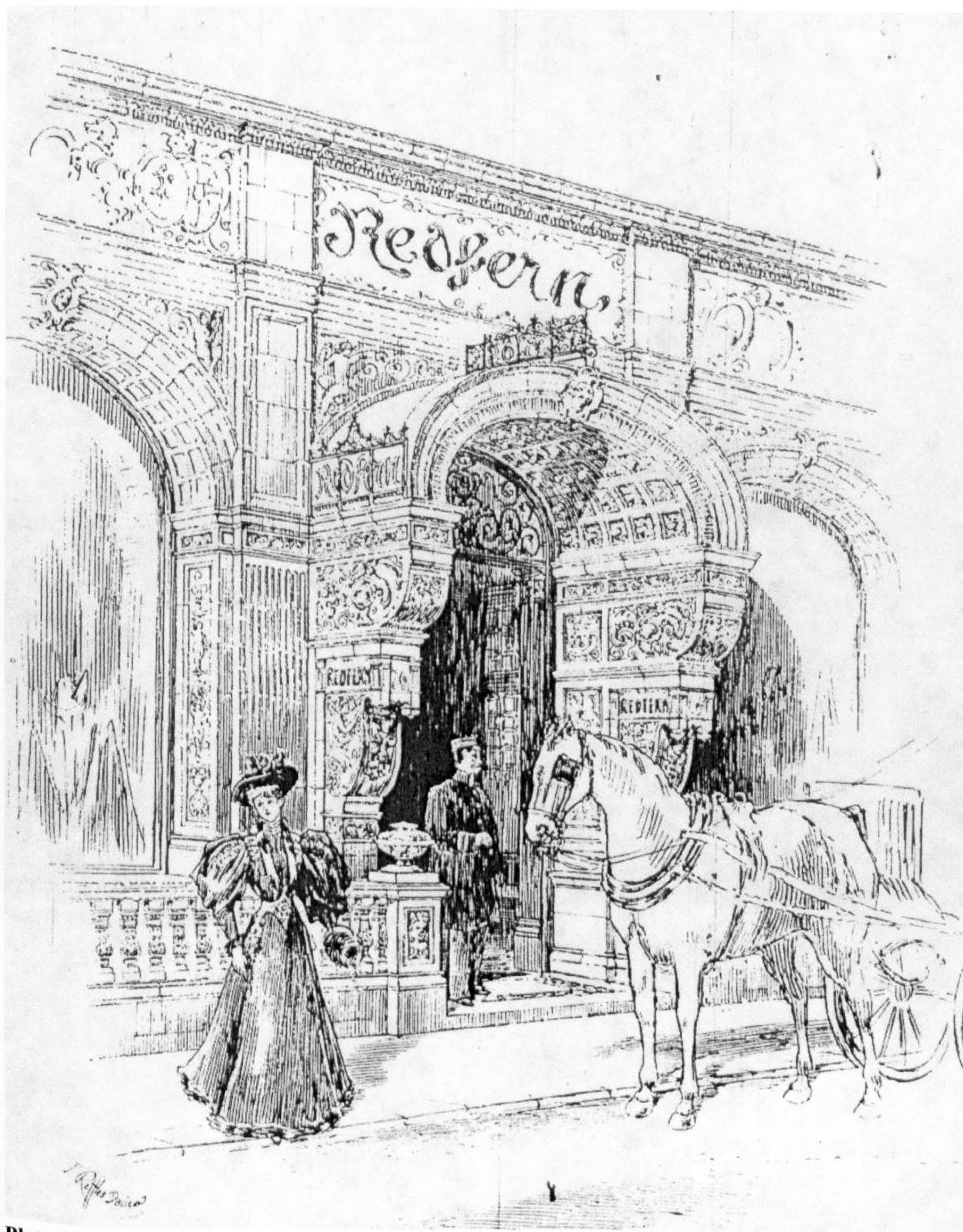


Plate 7.46. Facade of the Redfern Gallery, London.



Plate 7.47. Front elevation of the Redfern Gallery building.

triangular pediment. The facade is composed of a mixture of pinkish-buff terracotta and red brick. Plate 7.46, another sketch by T. Raffles Davison, illustrates the building's original intricate terracotta decoration at street level. One of the main features of this ground-floor decoration was to have been a pair of grotesque caryatides whose function was to act as support brackets for the large entrance canopy visible in the drawing. These vigorously modelled figures by Elmes, were installed but soon replaced as the clients found them 'indecent', this being 'greatly to the disgust of the architect, who had taken very special pains over them'⁵¹. This scheme of decoration survived until at least 1923 when it was recorded on a photograph by Bedford Lemere⁵². Subsequently the ground and first floor facades were 'modernised' and nothing of the original decoration is preserved at this level.

Plates 7.47-7.49 illustrate the building above first floor level where the original decoration remains relatively intact. The overall picture of the facade shows the basic style with, at the bottom of the picture just above the first floor level, a row of bas-relief panels which are shown in detail in Plate 7.48. Quoting from the same source as that mentioned above, and relating to a photograph of the Redfern building, J. Miller Carr says: 'Here also is an enlargement of the entrance generally, showing to advantage the beautiful bas-reliefs which were modelled by

⁵¹ Carr, J. Miller, 'Terra-cotta, Constructional Faience, and Ceramic Mural Decoration', *British Architect*, lix (1903), pp.324-325 and 359-361. This article comprises the text of a lecture given by J. Miller Carr, of Doulton's, to the Society of Architects.

⁵² Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (London office), Bedford Lemere Collection photograph number 26311.



Plate 7.48. Redfern Gallery building, detail of bas-relief.



Plate 7.49. Redfern Gallery building, details of grotesques.

Messrs. Elmes & Son, of Kensington'⁵³. The bas-reliefs mentioned in this context may be examples situated nearer to the actual entrance rather than those shown in Plate 7.48, but the quote suggests the possibility that they were by the same hand; indeed they seem somewhat pedestrian to be by Neatby, even though he was well versed in neo-Renaissance work of this ilk. If Neatby did design decorative elements for this building they are much more likely to be the cherubs, dragons and grotesque face-masks, shown in Plate 7.49, located on the uppermost parts of the facade. Certainly, these figures are modelled in a more vigorous style, typical of Neatby's earlier work in this vogue.

The years from 1897 to 1901 witnessed the development and attainment of Neatby's mature architectural decorative style. This is marked by a continuing tendency to inject the curvi-linear forms of Art Nouveau into his designs, while incorporating many more traditional motifs that find their inspiration in the visual repertoire of the English Arts and Crafts Movement. Essentially, however, his works illustrate a growing self-confidence in both concept and the use of materials. A number of factors contributed to his artistic development, but particularly the nature of the projects on which he was involved and the ideas of other architects and designers with whom he worked or encountered through other means. His election to the Society of Designers in March 1899 was important as it brought him into contact with numerous colleagues working in the same field⁵⁴. Some of the members of the Society such as George

⁵³ Carr, J. Miller, 'Terra-cotta, Constructional Faience, and Ceramic Mural Decoration', *British Architect*, lix (1903), p.325.

⁵⁴ I.B., 'Designers' Jottings', *The Artist*, xxiv, (1899), pp. 213-214.

Haité, who had designed for Burmantofts⁵⁵, were presumably already known to Neatby but undoubtedly membership widened his professional circle and promoted the sharing of both practical ideas and artistic theory. Looking at Neatby's work, the ideas of several other designers can be perceived. Of these, perhaps the most importance influence was Walter Crane whose use of curvi-linear motifs and figural forms come closest to Neatby's own. There is no known evidence that the two men ever met, but it seems inconceivable that they did not, as the two moved in similar professional if not social circles. Although they may have met earlier, if a meeting did take place, it will almost certainly have been sometime during 1897-98 when Neatby was working on the decorative design scheme for the new museum extension to the Manchester Municipal School of Art, a project with which Crane was also associated⁵⁶.

Crane's involvement with the Manchester Municipal School of Art originated in 1892 when he was offered the vacant headmaster's post at the school by Charles Rowley, the recently appointed chairman of the management committee that ran the school⁵⁷. The offer to Crane was prompted by Rowley's determination to expand the teaching of design within the school; Crane, however, declined the position. Instead, he agreed to act as an advisor to the committee and to that end, in 1893, visited the school and produced a report suggesting improvements

⁵⁵ *Burmantofts Pottery* : various authors (Bradford : Bradford Art Galleries and Museums and Leeds City Museums, 1983), p. 33.

⁵⁶ Davis, J. : ' "A most important and necessary thing" an Arts and Crafts collection in Manchester', *Decorative Arts Society Journal*, xviii (1994), pp. 15-24.

⁵⁷ Crane, W. : *An Artist's Reminiscences* (London : Methuen and Co., 1907), p. 416, recounts that it was the post of Director of Design that he was offered in 1892. The dating and employments offered to Crane, given here, follow the information presented by Davis, J. : *Ibid*.

in the teaching of design in the school⁵⁸. Subsequently, Rowley persuaded Crane to accept a lesser position: that of Director of Design, in the hope that he would introduce something of the ideology of the Arts and Crafts Movement into the teaching programme of the school. For Crane's part, the post required him to attend the school for teaching and administrative duties for one week each month⁵⁹. This was the formalization of a relationship between Crane and the Manchester Municipal School of Art that was to last for several years. Ultimately, it was an unsuccessful experiment but out of the experience came two of Crane's most influential books: *The Bases of Design* (1898), and *Line and Form* (1900), which were based on lectures that he gave at the school⁶⁰.

Crane's report: *Recommendations and Suggestions*, proposed the building of a museum and the acquisition of a collection of objects to fill it, the artifacts to be representative examples of the best kinds of design in different materials, to act as an aid to the teaching of design within the school. In advocating this style of teaching by example, Crane was merely following current modern ideas on education, but the suggestion was eagerly adopted by Rowley, a man who Crane said: '... had a real enthusiasm for beautiful works of art, and earnestly desired and worked for the efficiency of the school'⁶¹. Fortunately, the school had access to a sum of

⁵⁸ Crane, W. : *Recommendations and Suggestions for Adoption, either as distinct from, or in addition to, the Present System of Instruction in Art in the Manchester School of Art and Technical School, especially with reference to the Study and Practice of Design* (Manchester: Manchester Municipal School of Art, 1893).

⁵⁹ Davis, J. : *Ibid*

⁶⁰ The former publication: *Bases of Design*, is dedicated to Charles Rowley, J.P.

⁶¹ Crane, W. : *An Artist's Reminiscences* (London : Methuen and Co., 1907), p. 441.



Plate 7.50. Manchester Municipal School of Art Museum, by J. Gibbons Sankey.



Plate 7.51. Exterior windows with decorated spandrels by Neatby.

£10,000 for building projects at the school, allocated out of the proceeds of the Royal Jubilee Exhibition which had been held in the Manchester in 1887. In a meeting held in 1894, Manchester City Council's Technical Instruction Committee supported the building of a museum in its annual report, commenting that it was impossible to continue with the effective teaching of design at the school unless a ready supply of decorative arts objects was available for student study⁶². Consequently, the architect J. Gibbons Sankey was commissioned to provide designs for the new museum extension.

Sankey chose a relatively simple design for the extension, 'It consisted of a large top-lit central gallery measuring 68 feet by 42 feet flanked on each side by an aisle or corridor linked to the gallery by a terracotta arcade. Opposite this, a second arcade opened from the corridor into a smaller transept-like gallery on each side, measuring 35 feet square'⁶³. The four terracotta arcades, each comprising three arches supported by four columns (making a total of sixteen columns in all), terracotta doorcases and exterior decorative details were designed by Neatby and produced by Doulton. Referring to this work, Plates 7.50-7.59 illustrate the exterior of the building while Plates 7.61-7.68 show interior details.

Plate 7.50 shows the building to be a rather industrial looking structure, somewhat reminiscent of a factory or warehouse, with rather exuberant detailing. This is particularly noticeable in the arrangement of the fenestration which sets pairs of pointed Gothic-style windows within three

⁶² Davis, J. : *Ibid.*

⁶³ Davis, J. : *Ibid.*, p. 21.



**Plate 7.52. Manchester Municipal School of Art Museum,
detail of exterior spandrel decoration.**

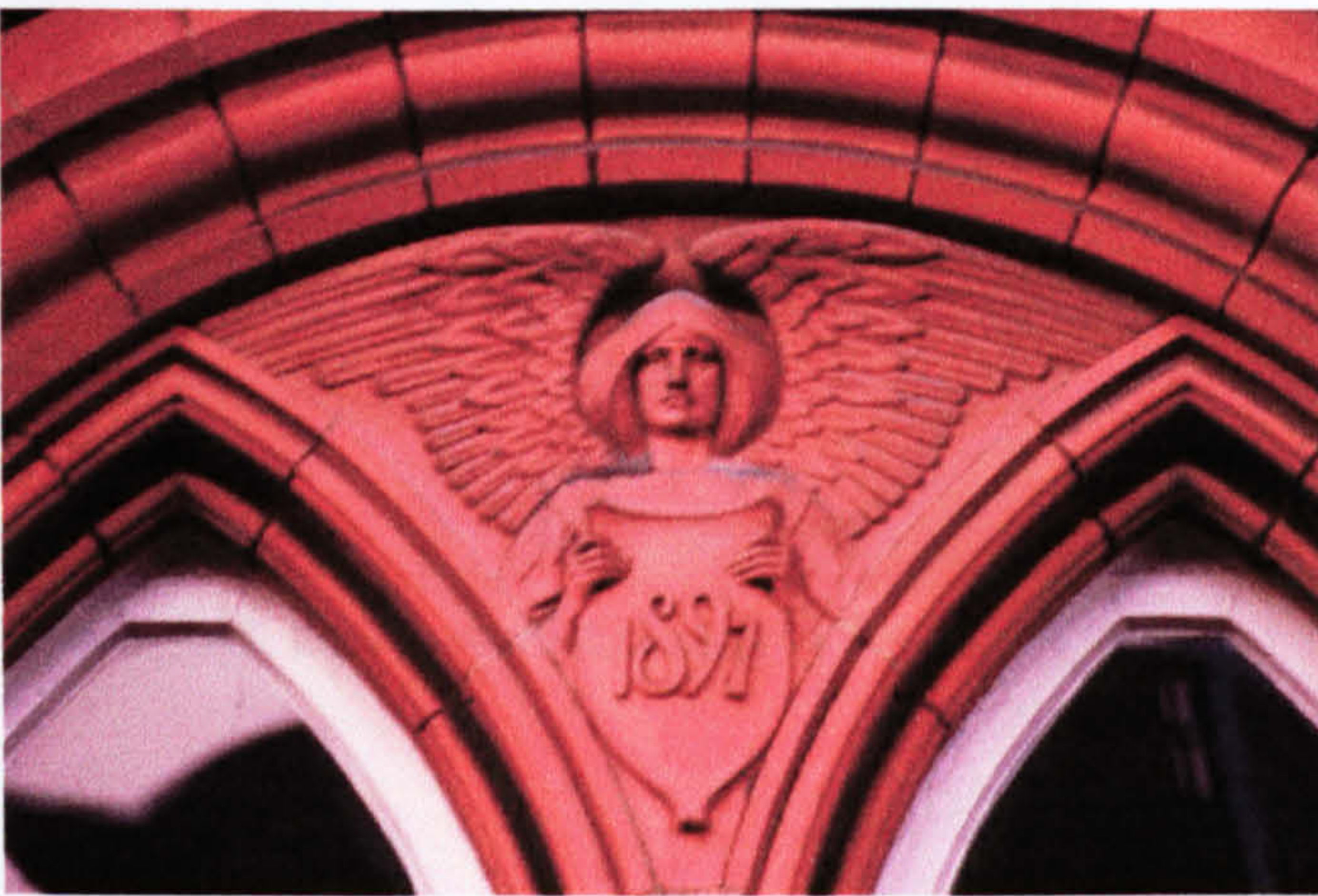


Plate 7.53. Spandrel decoration.

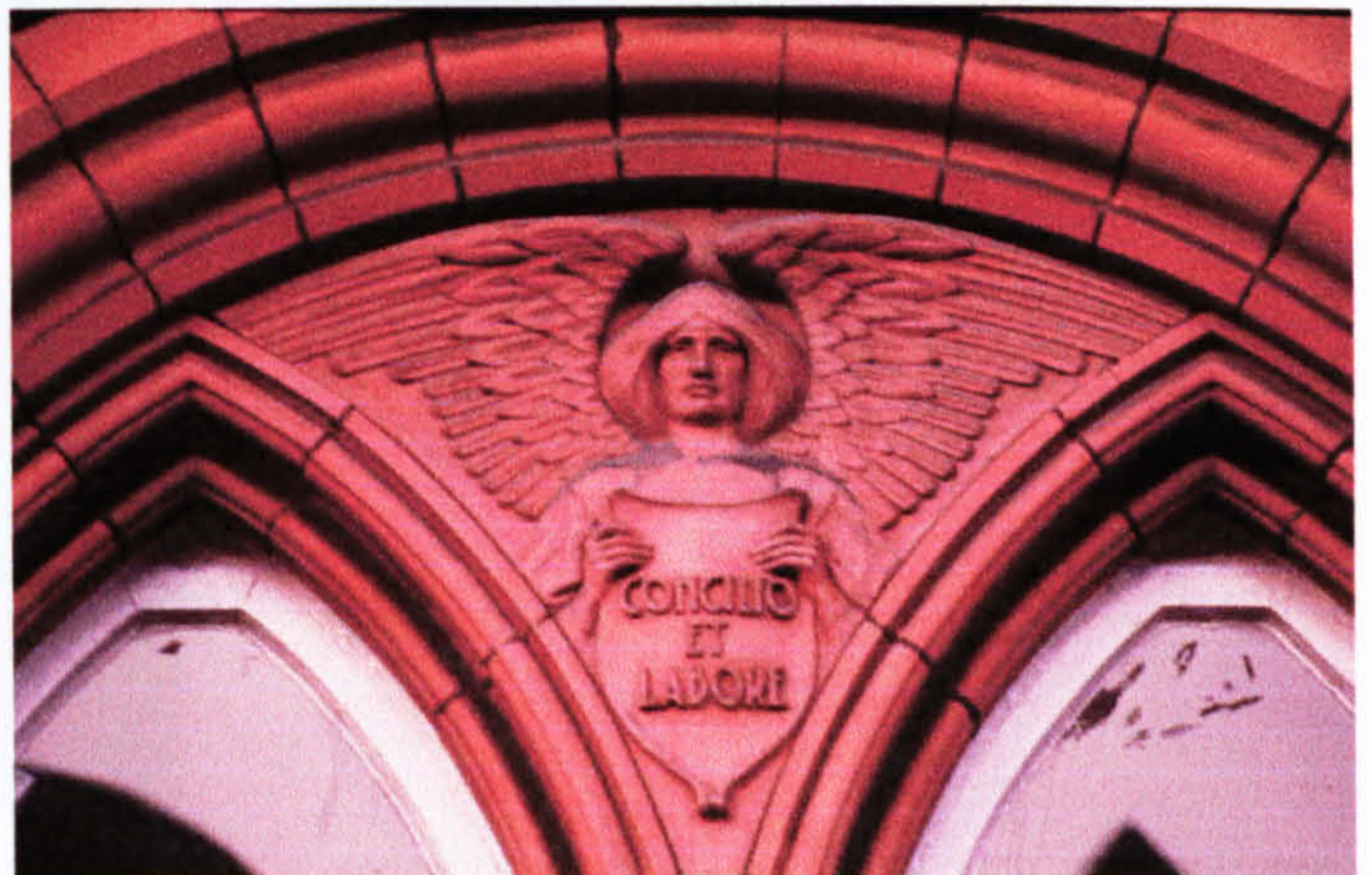


Plate 7.54. Spandrel decoration.



Plate 7.55. Terracotta label-stop by Neatby.

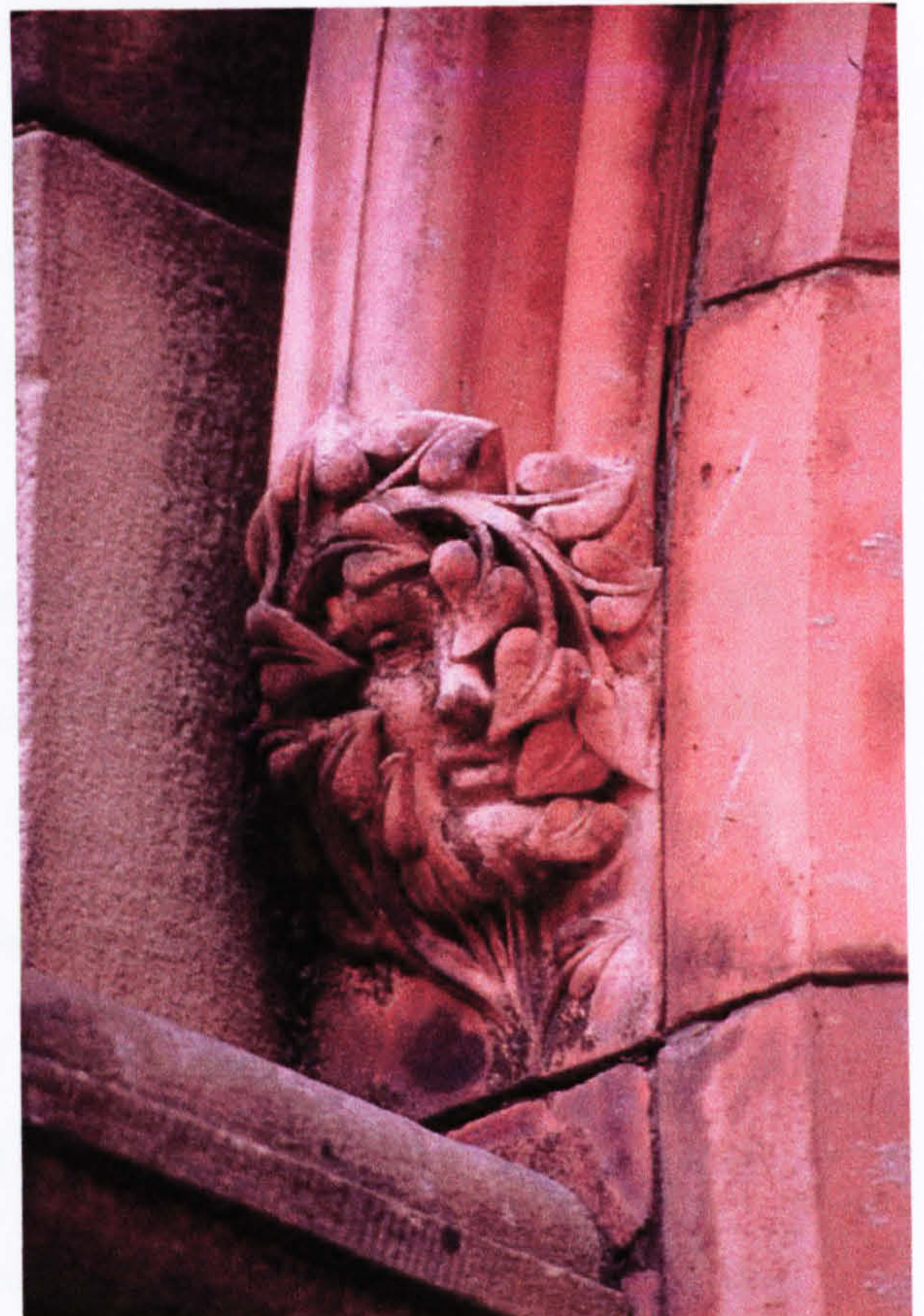


Plate 7.56. Terracotta label-stop by Neatby.

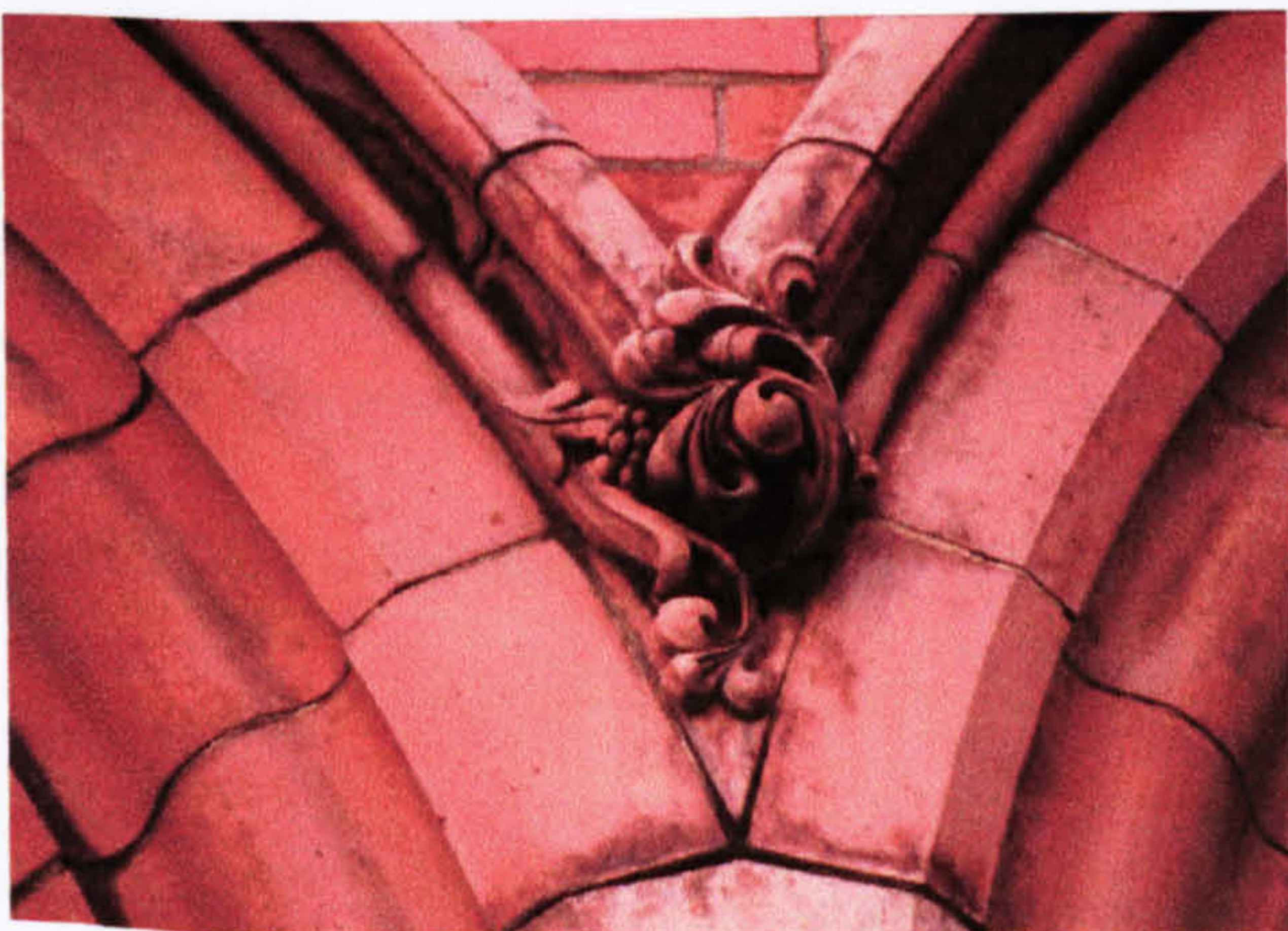


Plate 7.57. Terracotta label-stop by Neatby.

groups of arcades of Romanesque round-headed arches. The ecclesiastical appearance that this gives to the windows may have been jointly planned by Sankey and Neatby as the configuration allowed the latter to include a series of mediaeval-style motifs into the decorative scheme for the facade which is reflected in the interior terracotta work. Of these motifs, most characteristic are the anthropomorphic and vegetal label-stops at the ends of hood-mouldings around windows and doorways. Three of these are illustrated in Plates 7.55-7.57; the two incorporating male heads swathed in foliage are particularly effective and well modelled.

As can be observed on Plate 7.51, in the spandrels between the windows Neatby placed a series of relief-moulded winged angels, each one carrying a shield portraying either civic legends, motifs or 'chargings' from the City Arms⁶⁴. Plates 7.52-7.54 show three of these spandrel decorations, one with an angel holding a shield with the date 1897 displayed. These references to the City of Manchester and its largess are further reinforced by the building's commemorative plaque, Plate 7.58, with its mention of the City's Royal Jubilee Fund. Although this plaque is not signed it is reasonable to assume, as it is also in terracotta, that it was designed by Neatby. The style of the calligraphy used for the inscription is similar to that used by Neatby for other projects and the sinuous stems of the plants that decorate the plaque are typical of his use of Art Nouveau representational techniques (Plate 7.59).

Inside the building Neatby's designs in terracotta continue the theme set by the exterior. The

⁶⁴ *Artist*, xxv (1899), p. 99.



Plate 7.58. Manchester Municipal School of Art Museum, commemorative plaque.



Plate 7.59. Detail of plaque decoration.

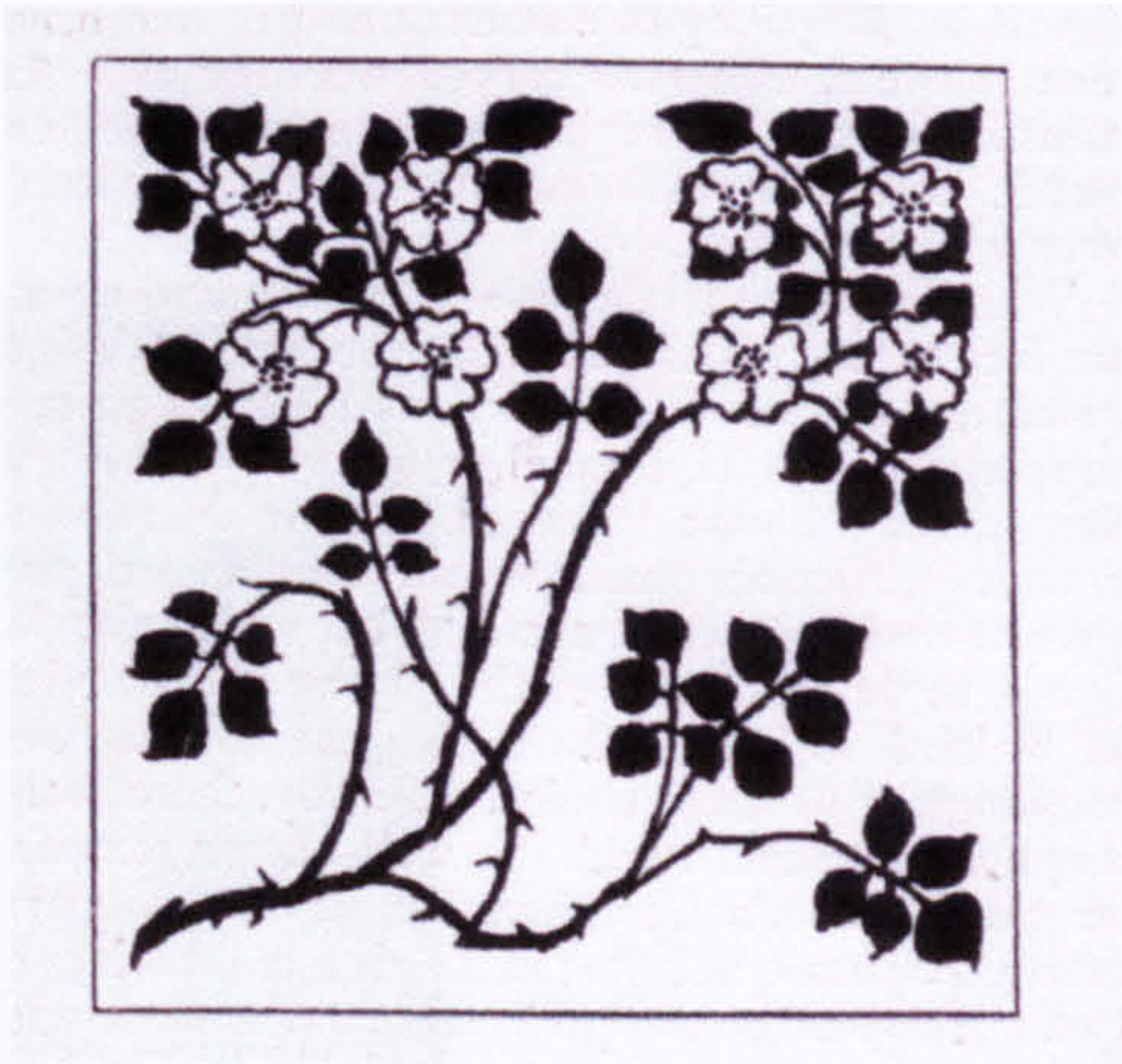


Plate 7.60. Formal flower design by Walter Crane, *Line and Form*, p. 80.

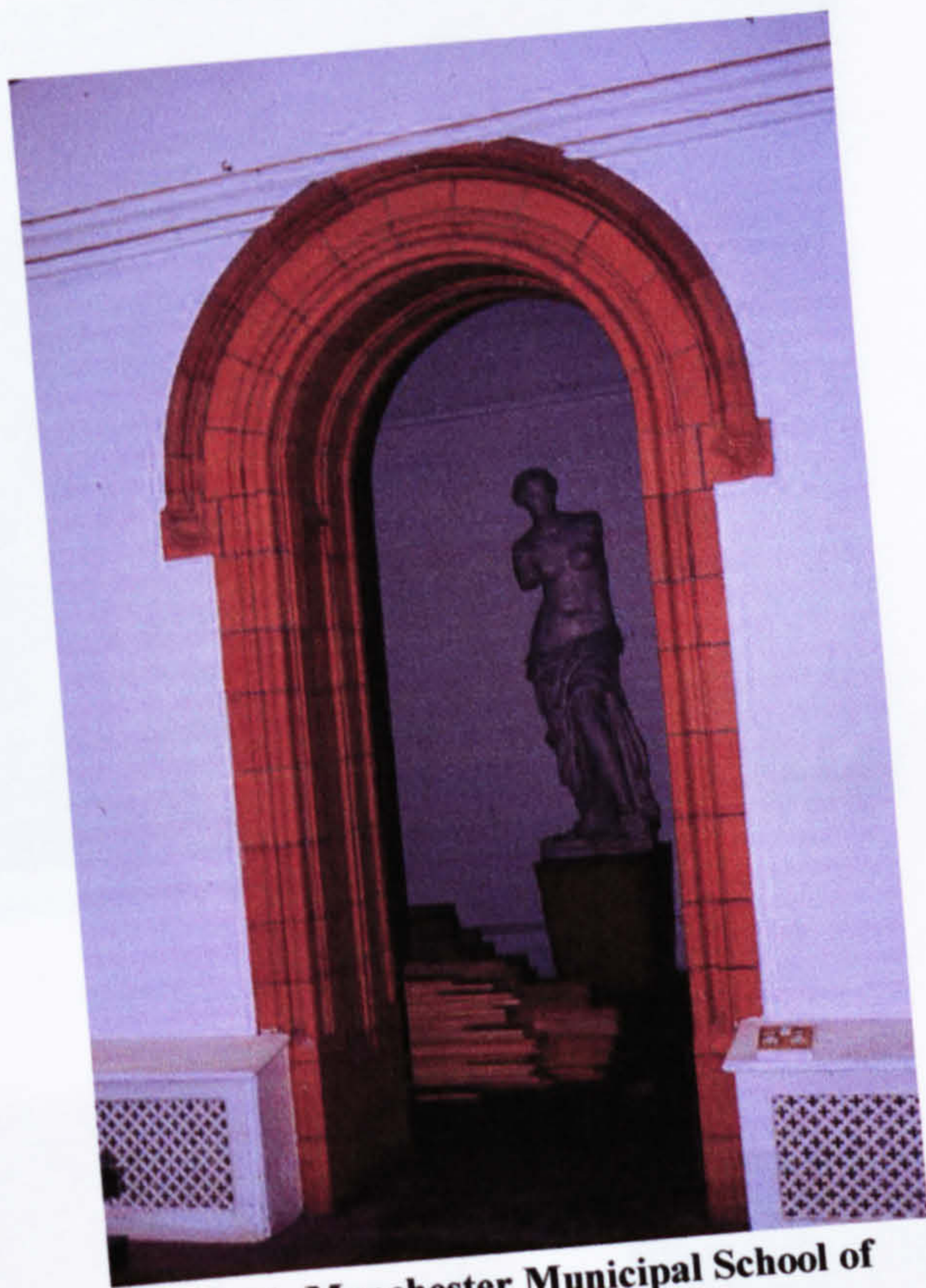


Plate 7.61. Manchester Municipal School of Art Museum, interior terracotta door case.



Plate 7.62. Terracotta label-stop.

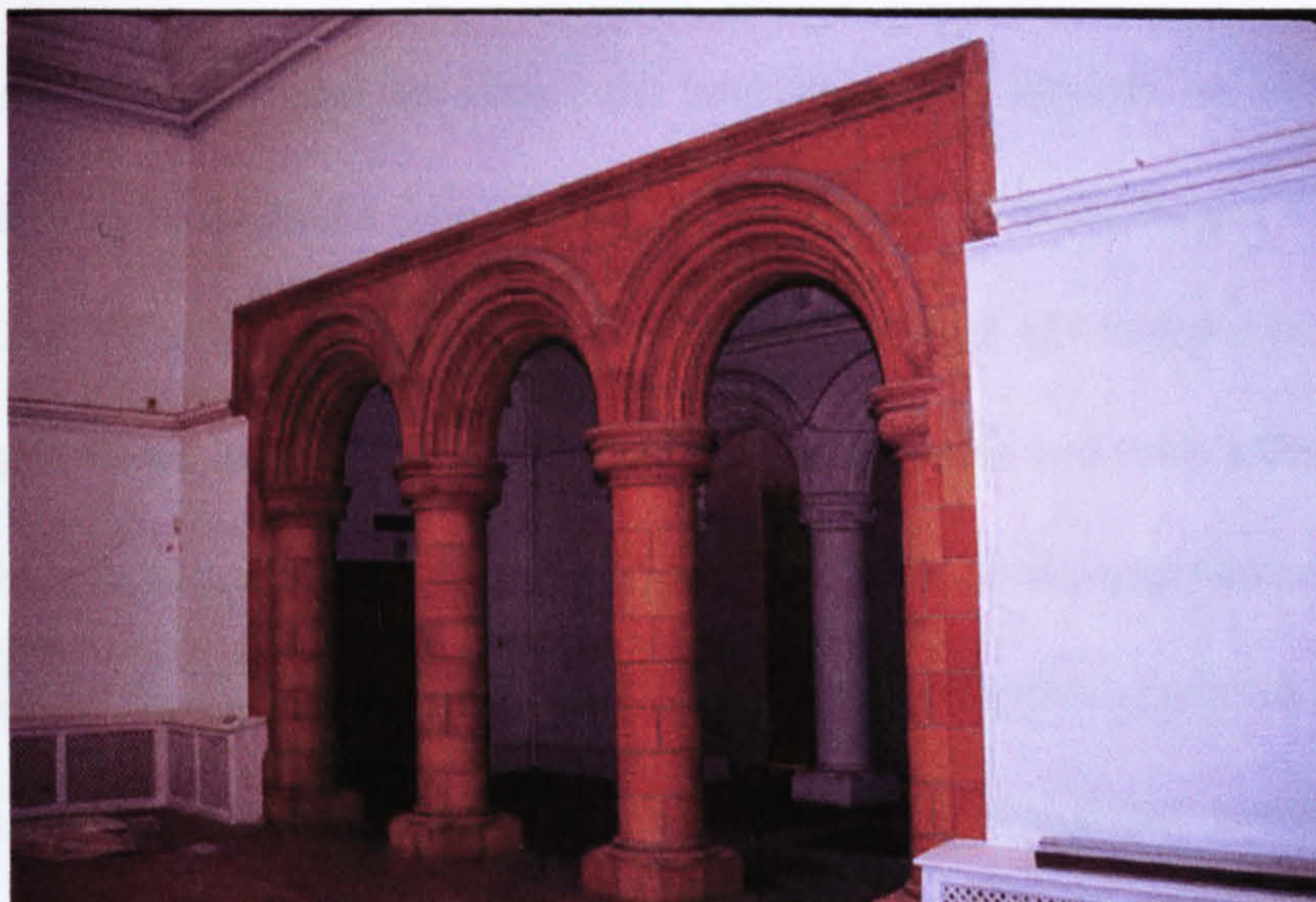


Plate 7.63. Manchester, interior terracotta arcade.



Plate 7.64. Manchester, column decoration.

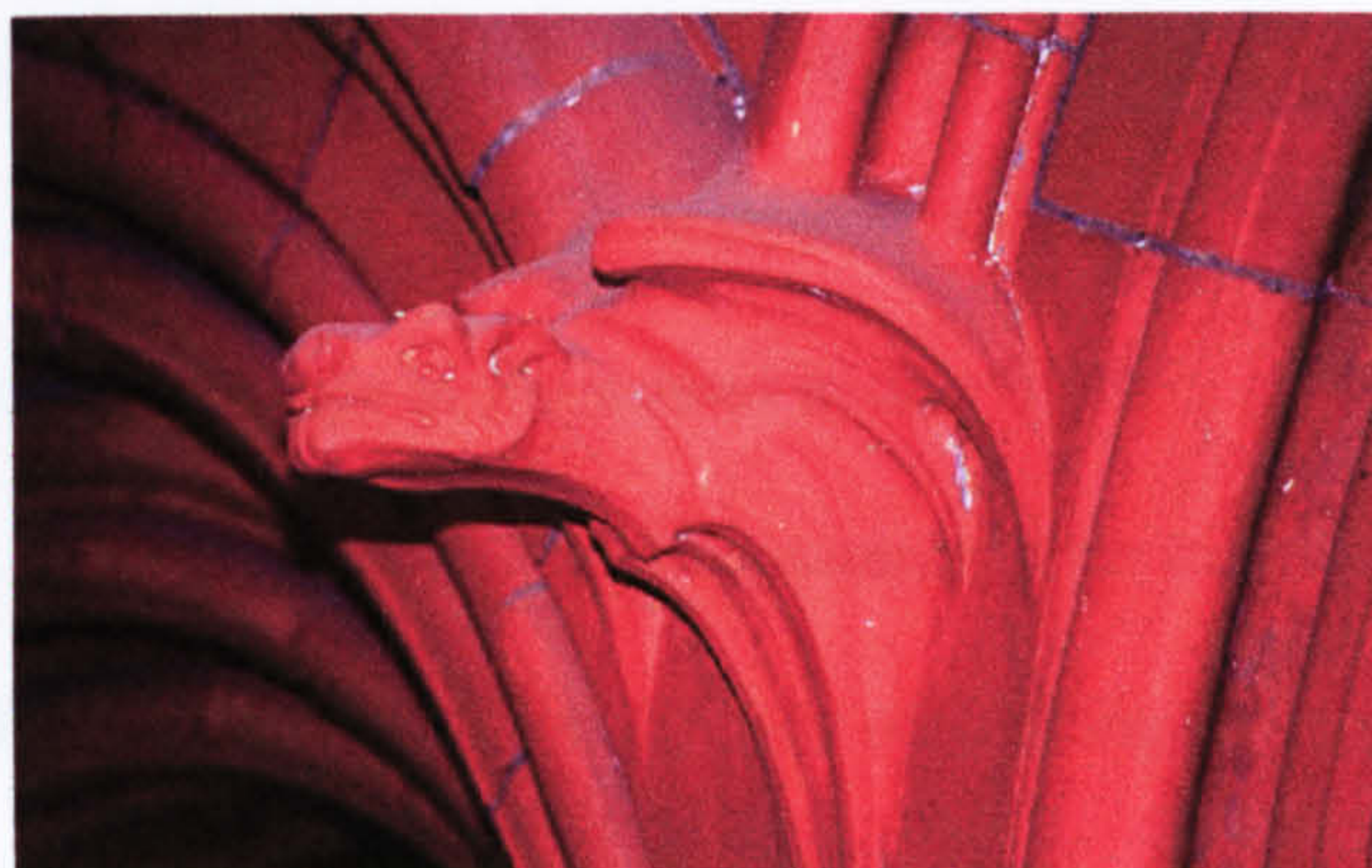


Plate 7.65. Manchester ornamental bat.

terracotta doorcases, see Plate 7.61, have naturalistic label-stops, with that shown in Plate 7.62, showing birds amidst foliage being reminiscent of William Burges's designs for the interiors of Cardiff Castle and Castell Coch of the 1870s. Most of Neatby's best work inside the building is, however, connected with the arcades of columns and arches that separate the main gallery from its side aisles and ancillary galleries. Here, grotesque bats, a motif used at Greenwich, survey the gallery from between the columns, and particularly on the capitals he indulged his imagination, producing designs incorporating sinuous art nouveau foliage and woodland animals, see Plates 7.63-7.67. Finally, Plate 7.68 shows a stylized tree, a tribute to modernity on an otherwise rather formal main entrance doorcase.

The gallery finally opened in October 1898, but most of the design work and completion of the terracotta elements seems to have taken place in 1897 or even earlier. According to Davis, Walter Crane resigned and left his post as Director of Design in the school in July 1896⁶⁵, however, in his *Reminiscences*, Crane gives the date as 'the close of the summer term in 1897'⁶⁶. Whatever date is correct Crane was closely associated with the concept of building a study collection gallery for the Art School and kept in touch with the project, advising on purchases for the collection for several years after his official departure from the school. He is almost certain to have had an input into the design of the building and must have had contact with Neatby either in London or when the latter visited Manchester to evaluate the project and prepare for the design scheme. However, not only would Crane have been a direct influence

⁶⁵ Davis, J. : *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁶⁶ Crane, W. : *An Artist's Reminiscences* (London : Methuen and Co., 1907), p. 441.



Plate 7.66. Manchester, terracotta capital.



Plate 7.67. Detail of capital.

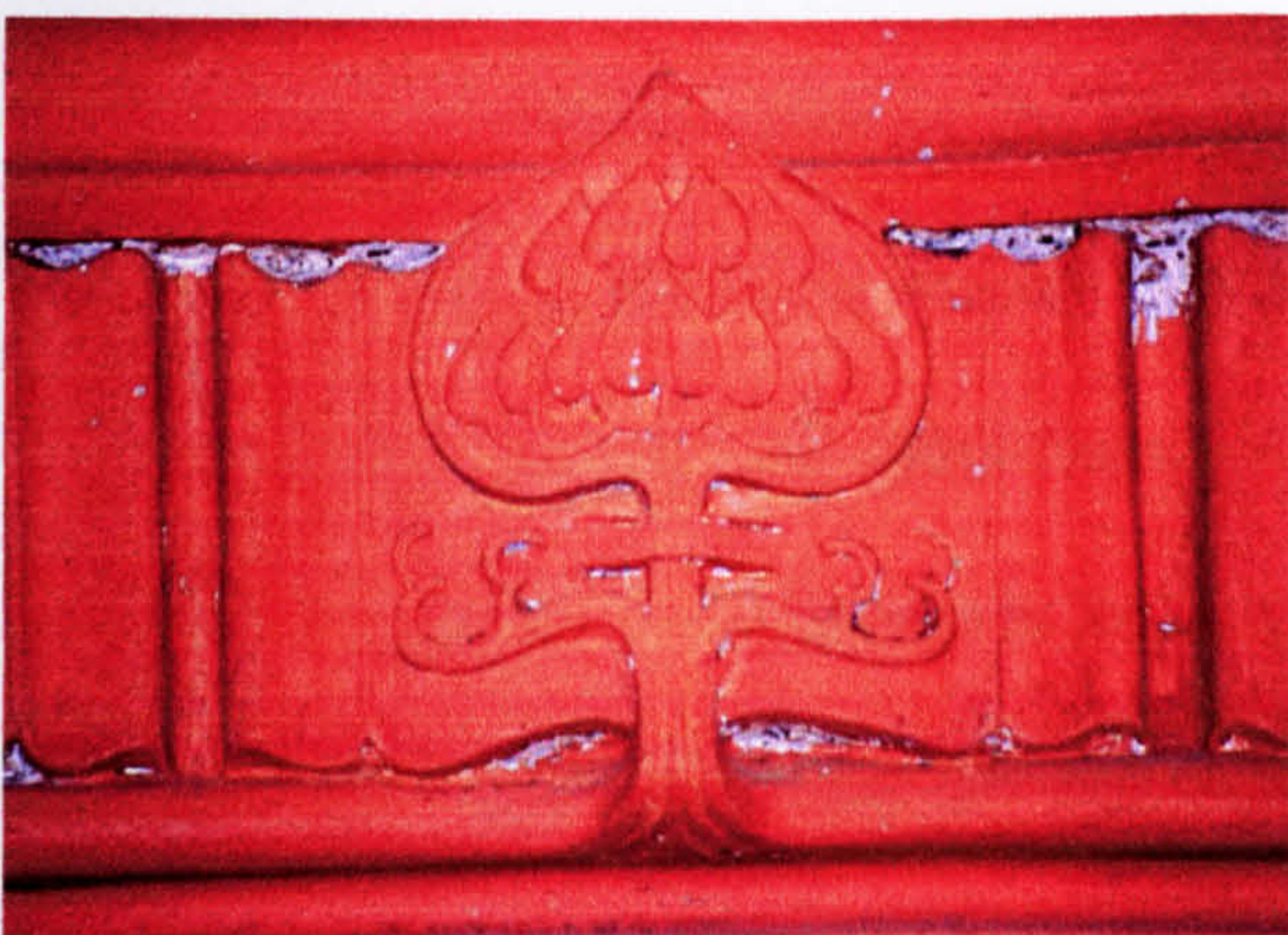


Plate 7.68. Stylized tree motif.

on Neatby but following his numerous lectures at the Art School, his ideas must have been current among many of the students and also the staff at the establishment, thereby providing Neatby with an additional source of ideas. Certainly at Manchester and on subsequent projects Neatby's designs show such a difference from his earlier works that he would seem to have been exposed to some new source of inspiration at about this time. His earlier reliance on Renaissance motifs is replaced with a much broader repertoire of both visual forms and techniques, the latter reflecting a search for an outlet for new ideas. His art becomes much more like his designs for the Blackpool Winter Gardens, but without the necessity of a seaside venue to provoke novelty. Neatby embraces the visual language of art nouveau but anglicizes it, combining contemporary continental linear forms with the vernacular traditionalism of the Arts and Crafts Movement and in some instances the simple planar construction of Japanese prints. More than this, Neatby's work begins to display a formal approach to stylization, relating naturalistic forms to rigid principles of spacial definition. It is as if Neatby had suddenly acquired a formal education in art and design and it seems reasonable to assume that such an education originated with Walter Crane or his acolytes.

At Manchester, Neatby replaces the Renaissance grotesques and strapwork with English mediaeval elements. This is in keeping with the pseudo-Gothic style of the exterior window format and the cruciform and aisled church-like plan of the gallery but is perhaps determined more by the resurgence of interest in English vernacular styles in the 1890s, relating not just to the designs of Walter Crane but also to the architectural works of Harrison Townsend, Voysey and Lethaby. The mediaevalizing tendency is seen particularly in the two label-stops,

Plates 7.56-7.57, located to either side of the exterior entrance and said by the *Artist* to represent 'a remarkably powerful bit of modelling' by Neatby⁶⁷. These finely modelled male heads swathed in sinuous foliage and stylized leaves are an obvious reference to the *Green Man* or *Jack-in-the-Green*, a mythical character found in English folklore, who is usually portrayed as a figure dressed and covered in foliage. His face, in particular, is represented in a variety of English church carvings, in wood or stone, and he is associated with festivities celebrating the arrival of spring. In the context of the pseudo-ecclesiastical architecture here and in relation to the philosophical concepts behind the planning of the new art school gallery, the symbolic meaning seems obvious, referring to a fresh beginning for art tuition in Manchester. For Neatby, the figures represent the beginning of a rejection of specifically Classical motifs in favour of a much broader visual vocabulary, one which increasingly was to favour English traditional themes.

Continuing with the analysis of the symbolic content of Neatby's designs for the exterior of the building, the angels that occupy the spandrels between the windows echo the high-minded motives for the establishment of the gallery as promoted by Charles Rowley and his allies on the Manchester City Council. The Municipal backing for the project is also most convincingly displayed on the dedication plaque on the exterior facade which reads:

MANCHESTER MUNICIPAL SCHOOL OF ART

The Tablet Commemorates The Gift by The COUNCIL GUARANTORS

⁶⁷ 'W.J. Neatby's work and a new process', *The Artist*, xxv (1899), p. 93.

Of The MANCHESTER ROYAL JUBILEE EXHIBITION
1887 of THE SUM of £10,000 ToWARDS THE ERECTION& EQUIPMENT of THE
ROYAL JUBILEE EXHIBITION WING
OF THE MUNICIPAL SCHOOL OF ART

The inscription is bounded by appropriate floral designs, once again referring to the well-being and expected growth of achievement within the school as it carefully nurtures its students. The floral motif used on the left-hand side of the plaque is particularly interesting in respect of the evolution of Neatby's style. Shown in detail in Plate 7.59, the motif, essentially a flower with its petals conforming to and enclosed within a square, illustrates an important stage in the development of Neatby's thoughts on the adaptation of natural forms to the confines of regular and severely delineated spaces. The design conforms exactly with Crane's own theories on the stylization of natural forms and spacial definition as outlined in his book *Line and Form*, the principles of which were clarified during his time at Manchester. Plate 7.60, taken from this book, shows a remarkable similarity in its configuration to the floral motif from Manchester shown in Plate 7.59, and was used by Crane to explain about the 'treatment', better described as stylization, of naturalistic forms when they are required to fit harmoniously within a previously delineated shape such as a square or circle⁶⁸. Crane argues at some length for a correspondence between the line and form of a decorative motif and the boundary that surrounds it:

⁶⁸ Crane, W. : *Line and Form* (reprint, London : 1902; originally published London : 1900), pp. 79-80.

‘.... a certain sense of geometric control would come in in the selection of our liners and masses, both in regard to each other and in regard to the shape of the inclosing boundary. We seem to feel the need of some answering line or re-echo in the character of the composition to the shape of its boundary, to give it its distinctive reason for existence in that particular form - just as we should expect a shell-fish to conform to the shape of its shell. Such a re-echo or acknowledgement might be ever so slight, or might be quite emphatic and dominate as the leading motive, but for perfectly harmonious effect it must be there. It matters not what forms we deal with, floral, animal, human; directly we come to combine them in a design, to control them by a boundary, to inclose them in a space, we shall feel this necessity of controlling line, which, however concealed, is yet essential to bring them into that harmonious relation which is the essence of all design. the more purely ornamental the purpose of our design, and the more abstract in form it is, the more emphatically we may carry out the principle of correspondence of line between that of the inclosing boundary and that of the design itself; and, *vice versa*, as the design becomes more pictorial in its appeal and more complex and varied in its elements, the more we may combine the leading motive or principle of line with secondary one, or with variations, since every fresh element, every new direction of line, every new form

introduced, demands some kind of re-echo to bring it into relation with the other elements of the design, or parts of the composition, whatever may be its nature and purpose⁶⁹.

Crane's arguments, further legitimized by his claim that his observations on the theme originated in the 'constructive necessities' of Egyptian and Greek architecture, provided an intellectual basis for spatially confined decorative design not just for Neatby, but for a whole generation of professional designers including C.R. Ashbee (1863-1942)⁷⁰ and a whole range of amateur and student hopefuls who submitted designs as competition entries to the *Studio* magazine around the turn-of-the-century. Whether or not Crane inspired Charles Rennie Mackintosh's move towards the use of abstract geometric spatially-defined motifs in the later 1890s is uncertain, but in its initial stages, the latter's work seems to have a similar visual and theoretical ancestry. However, as far as Neatby is concerned, Crane's ideas gave the younger man a starting point from which to develop a range of severely stylized motifs that reached their practical culmination in his architectural works of 1899-1901: the Everard Building, Bristol and particularly the Royal Arcade, Norwich, both of which are discussed below.

In 1898 Neatby produced a number of decorative schemes in a variety of media, including perhaps his most overtly art nouveau mural painting for the tiled proscenium arch of the

⁶⁹ Crane, W. : *Ibid.*, pp. 108-113.

⁷⁰ See Crawford, A. : *C.R. Ashbee: Architect, Designer and Romantic Socialist* (New Haven and London : Yale University Press, 1985), pl. 143, for an example of stylized and spatially confined floral motifs on the interior of the doors of a writing cabinet by Ashbee.

recreation hall stage at the St. Nicholas Hospital, Gosforth, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. This work displays all the richness of colour and strength of line and form that is found in the most archetypal French and Belgian curvi-linear Art Nouveau creations. In the use of bold linear style, subject matter and the juxtaposition of intense hues the painting exudes an overwhelming artistic decadence and lack of restraint that can have few, if any equals, in English Art Nouveau designs. It ranks with Mary Watts's Compton Mausoleum, Surrey, as one of Britain's finest examples of *avant-garde* decorative architecture from the *fin-de-siècle*, yet has received scant attention in publications devoted to the period⁷¹.

The proscenium arch, surrounding a stage of some 16 feet in height and 21 feet in width, Plate 7.69, is built into a large theatre and recreation hall within the St. Nicholas Hospital, Gosforth, a complex designed by the architect John W. Dyson and constructed in the late 1890s as a public mental asylum. The provision of such a lavish recreational facility in this otherwise architecturally sombre establishment may be explained by the close connection that the building seems to have enjoyed with the fund raising effort set underway by the Mayor of Newcastle, in 1896, for the construction of the Royal Infirmary, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, a project connected with Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. This latter hospital was initially decorated with some sixty tile picture panels by Doulton and this may well have influenced the decision

⁷¹ The Watts Mausoleum has appeared in numerous publications since its completion in 1904, of which Gould, V.F. : 'The Symbolic Bas-Relief Designs of Mary Watts', *Decorative Arts Society Journal*, no. 21 (1997), pp. 9-21, is one of the most recent. This is in direct contrast to Neatby's proscenium arch which only seems to appear in Green, J. : *Brightening the Long Days - Hospital Tile Pictures* (Gloucester : Tiles and Architectural Ceramics Society, 1987), p. 50, where it only receives scant mention.



Plate 7.69. St. Nicholas Hospital, ceramic proscenium arch by Neatby.

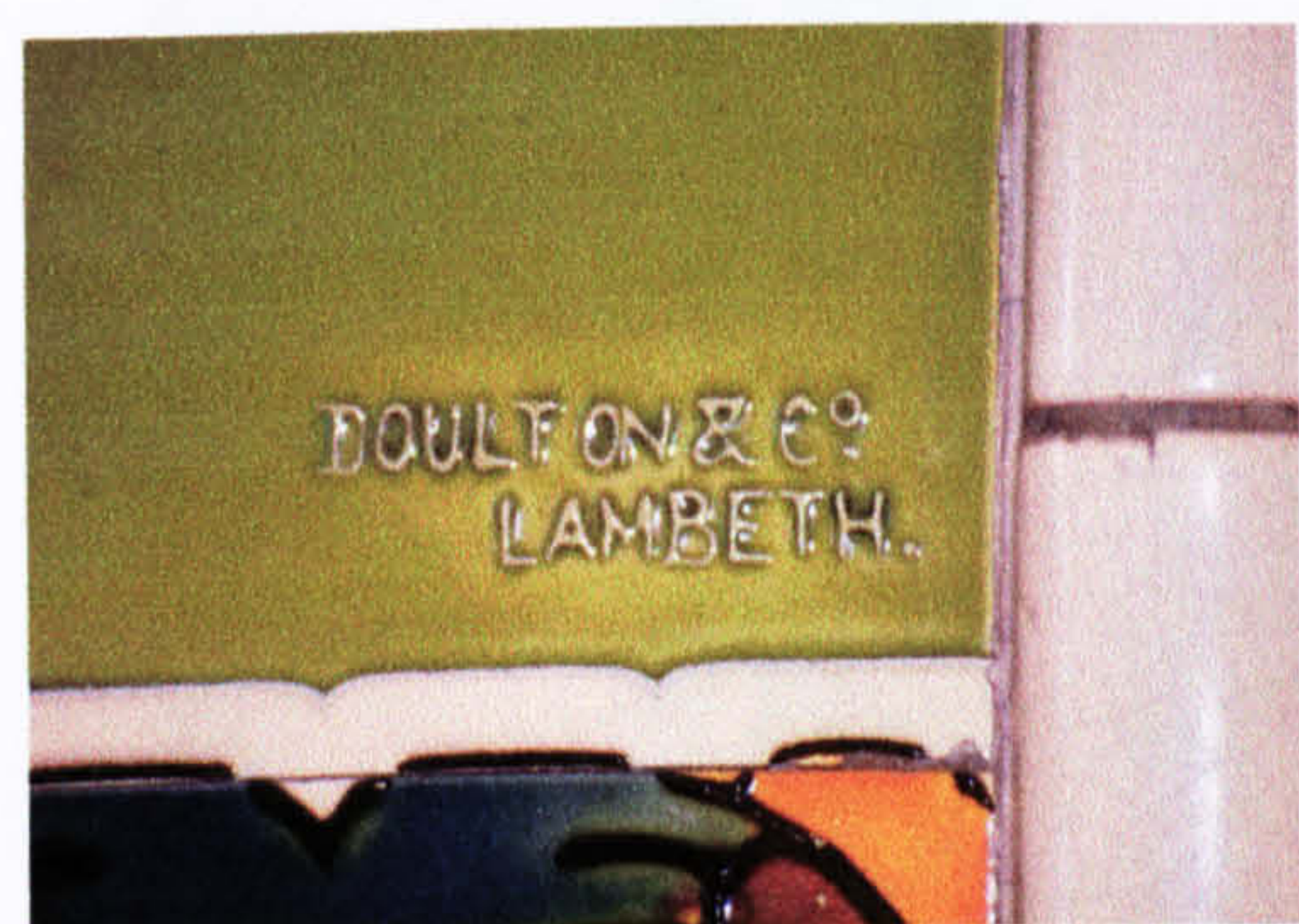


Plate 7.70. Doulton name tile.

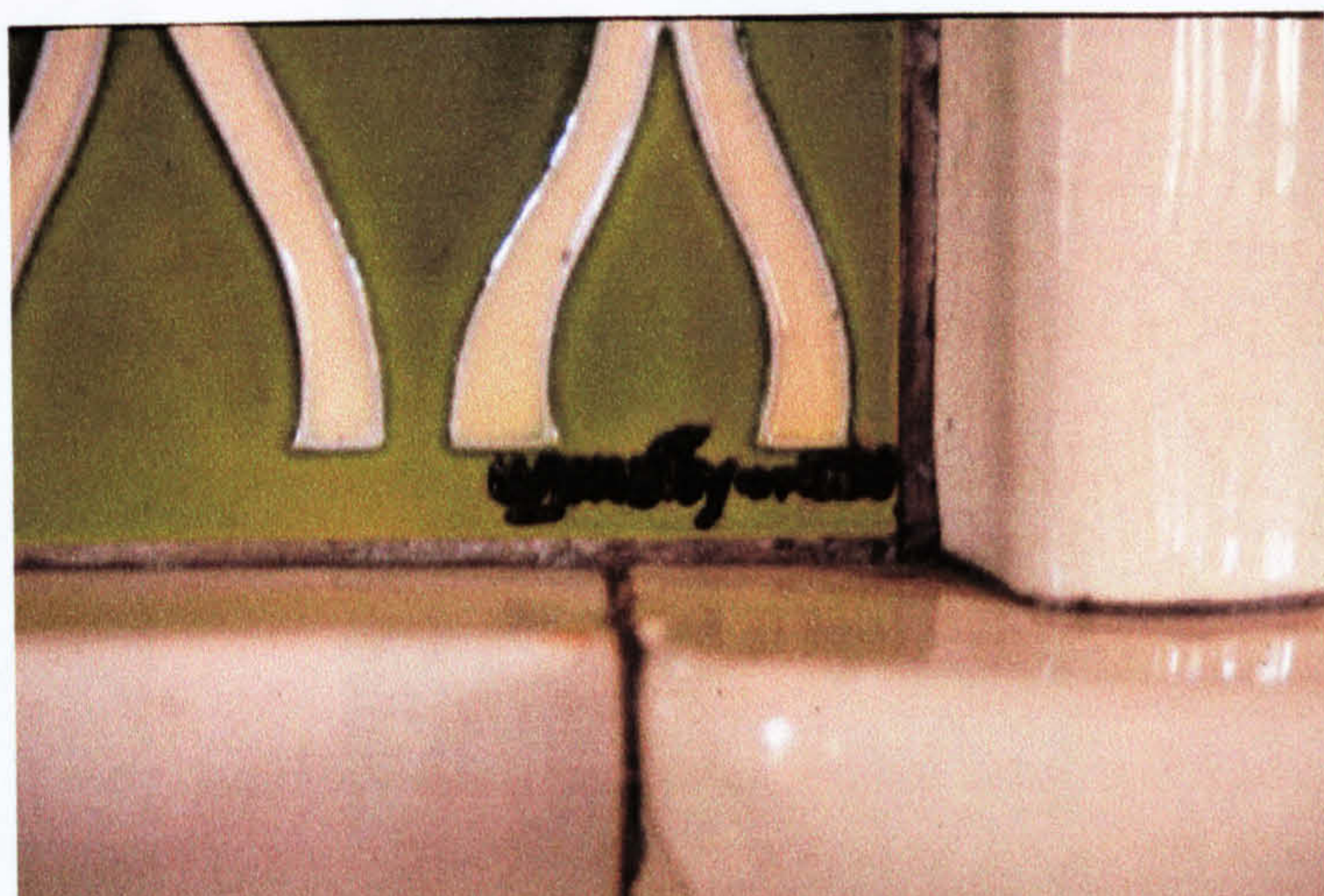


Plate 7.71. Neatby's signature on the proscenium arch (the dark irregular outline in the centre of the picture).



Plate 7.72. Central female head at the apex of the proscenium arch.



Plate 7.73. Theatrical muse at the left-hand side of the arch.



Plate 7.74. Theatrical muse at the right-hand side of the arch.

to use ceramic decoration by the same firm at Gosforth⁷². Certainly, the company name features prominently on the Gosforth tilework, Plate 7.70, while the artist's name and the date of 1898 can also be seen, Plate 7.71.

The basic design of the theatre arch shows two sinuous trees, one on each side of the stage, whose branches and leaves weave their way across the top of the arch where they come to rest to either side of a centrally placed female head, presumably to be identified as a theatrical muse, Plate 7.72. To either side of her head, groups of birds wait to carry her words to the audience, while sitting in the trees, two further muses, Plates 7.73-7.74, blowing musical instruments, herald her message. The structure is made up of a variety of tiles, plain and moulded, but the main mural work is executed in polychrome with the main outlines of the design tube-lined onto 6 inch by 6 inch square tiles. This technique is particularly suited to art nouveau curvi-linear designs as the method of piping thick clay slip onto the surface of the tile from a tub-liner's bag, in much the same way as icing a cake, allows the artist complete freedom over the medium, permitting the drawing of long flowing curves or small circular motifs.

Plates 7.75-7.76 show closer pictures of the two figures who sit in each upper corner of the mural. Perhaps also to be viewed as tree-dwelling *dryads*, these female forms engage the spectator on a number of levels. Stylistically, although superficially appearing somewhat pre-Raphaelite in their dress and demeanor, they convey theatrical modernity, with their costumes representing the latest *avant-garde* movements within popular theatre. In this, their

⁷² Green, J. : *Ibid*, pp. 46-47 and 50.



Plate 7.75. Detail of left figure.



Plate 7.76. Detail of right figure.



Plate 7.77. Detail of head on right figure.



Plate 7.78. Detail of tree branches showing Art Nouveau curvilinear style.



Plate 7.79. Illustration of one of the tree trunks.

resemblance to Neatby's Blackpool figures is not accidental, but is merely a development. Indeed, the detail of the figure to the right of the stage, Plate 7.77, shows her to be wearing a complex headdress very similar to those used by him earlier in Blackpool and of a type that would continue in his work and that of others into the early years of the next century, as a typical costume accessory for those artists working in the stylistic area that bordered both art nouveau and English arts and crafts ideas. The figures, in addition to heralding the words of the theatrical muse, in playing instruments also represent the musical side of theatre while their location high up in trees echoes theatrical poses, possibly even making reference to aerial spectacles and acrobatics.

Considering further stylistic details, Plate 7.78, showing one of the trees, illustrates Neatby's mastery of Art Nouveau concepts with the long curving tree branches that suddenly experience dramatic changes in direction offering a respectable English alternative to the Belgian Victor Horta's 'whiplash' motifs⁷³. The tree trunk illustrated in Plate 7.79 shows an intense combination of colours used to define both representational and stylised forms, the latter of which often seem almost abstract, with the tube-lined pattern forming a complex system of contours for the display of colour. This treatment of form and colour is a new departure for Neatby showing a two dimensional polychromatic art evolving out of previously monochrome bas-relief style as typified by his designs for the capitals at the Manchester Art School building. Plates 7.80-7.81, illustrate the trunk of one of the trees and a detail of its roots. The latter

⁷³ Dierkens-Aubry, F. : *The Horta Museum - Bussels, Saint-Gilles* (Brussels : Cultura Nostra, 1990), pp. 37-41.



Plate 7.80. Floral decoration around base of tree trunk.



Plate 7.81. Detail of roots at base of tree.

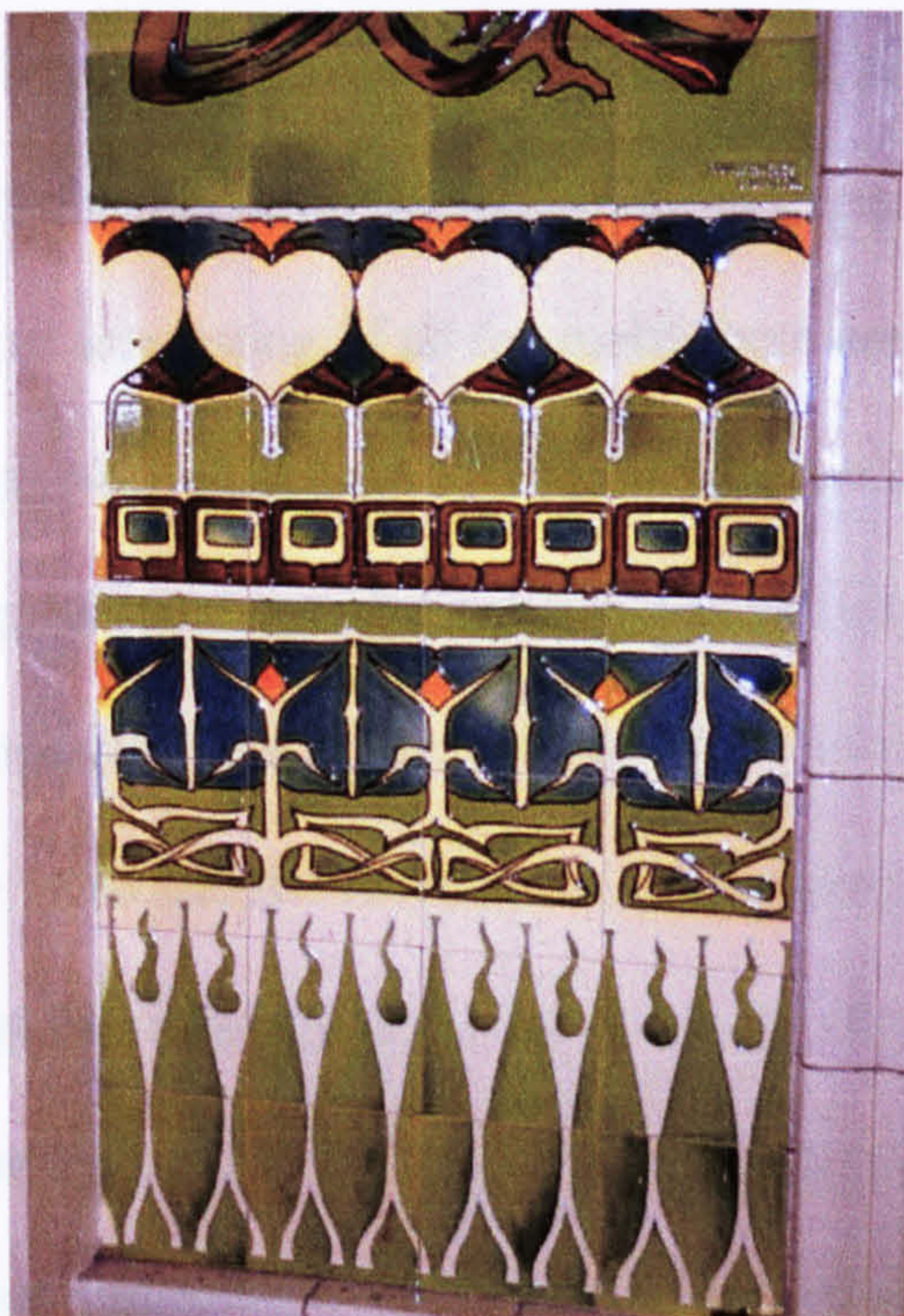


Plate 7.82. Geometric pattern at the base of the design.

picture illustrates both Neatby's appreciation of stylization as a decorative component within the overall composition but also the principle of correspondence between a decorative device and spatial confines, effectively developing upon theories put forward by Crane and discussed above. The stylized root design is echoed in the more geometrically organised panel shown in Plate 7.82, examples of which are located below the main tree design on each side of the arch. Here, despite the riot of unrestrained curves that form the main design above, different forces can be seen at work, promoting a more academic treatment of decorative motifs.

In this panel Neatby exercises his mastery of pattern, using a variety of stylized motifs, some of which appear in subsequent projects, such as the heart motifs which can be seen in the Royal Arcade in Norwich (1899). Surmounted by stylized rectangular turquoise blue flower heads, and positioned just below the centre of the panel the root designs, now almost an abstract form, are precursors of root motifs that occur on the facade of the Everard Building, Bristol (1901). However, perhaps the most interesting of all the motifs here are the brown, white and blue rectangular devices running below the heart motifs. Situated as they are against a leaf-green background, these rectangular forms are abstract symbols that could be interpreted as flower heads. But, such an interpretation fails to take into account the composition of other stylized flower heads on the same panel and the recently executed example at Manchester, shown in Plate 7.59. These rectangular forms appear to be something different and may represent an attempt to associate the inner structure of a form with its outward appearance as exemplified by the flower heads, stems and roots. As such they may reflect the transmission of water, necessary for life, within the vegetal stem and thereby promote much wider concepts relating

to life and the regenerative cycle. Certainly, the structural nature of the motifs and the use of the colour blue at the centre of a brown outer casing supports this suggestion. In this way he has effectively reconciled, albeit in simple geometric forms, artistic concerns relating to perceptions of the internal and its relationship with the external, a matter which taken to its logical conclusion pertains to the human soul and its relationship with the physical body. This exploration of ornamental devices that encompass greater meaning than the simple historical symbolism of his earlier works represent an immense development and takes Neatby's ideas far beyond those of Crane or indeed Christopher Dresser upon whose work some of Crane's ideas on plant structures and symmetries are based⁷⁴.

The same year (1898) also saw the construction of the New Palace Theatre, and the facade of the adjacent Great Western Hotel on Union Street, Plymouth, Devon. The project was designed by the London firm of architects : Wimperis and Arber, with the facade being constructed of plain and glazed terracotta by Doulton and Company⁷⁵. Plates 7. 83-7.84, show general exteriors of the building with a dark brown glazed tile ground floor and buff terra-cotta above. The main feature of the theatre facade are two immense tiled lunettes painted in vitreous enamels and depicting scenes from the Spanish Armada, adapted from paintings by Sir Oswald Brierley. This seems a particularly appropriate subject for the decoration of a major building in Plymouth and the marine theme is continued in the other decoration found on the facade. Despite not being mentioned by name in the description of the building given in the *British*

⁷⁴ For example, see Dresser, C. : *The Art of Decorative Design* (London : 1862).

⁷⁵ 'New Palace Theatre, Plymouth', *British Architect*, vol. L (1898), pp. 70, 379-380 and 391-392.

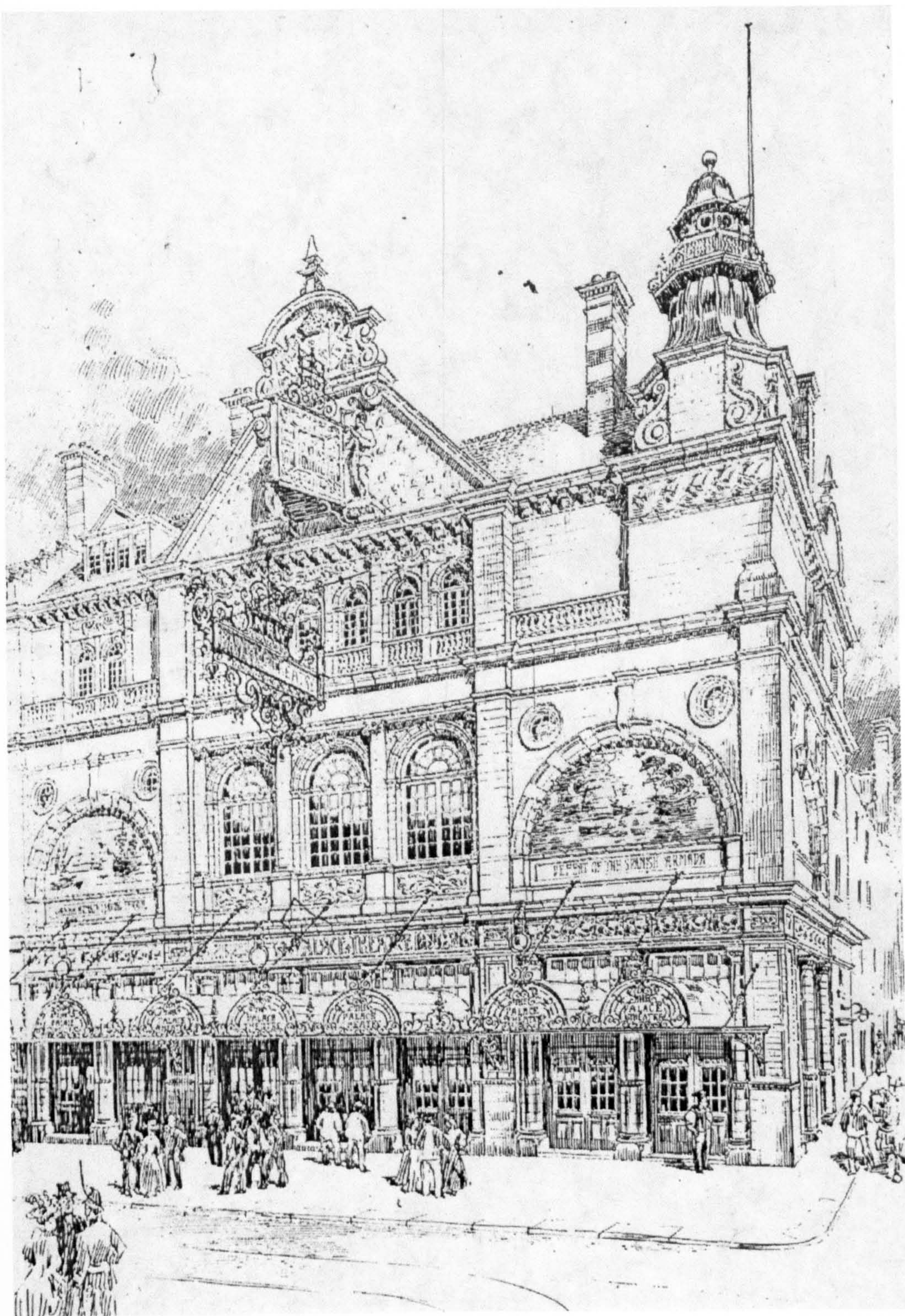


Plate 7.83. New Palace Theatre, Plymouth by Wimperis and Arber (1898), as published in the *British Architect*.

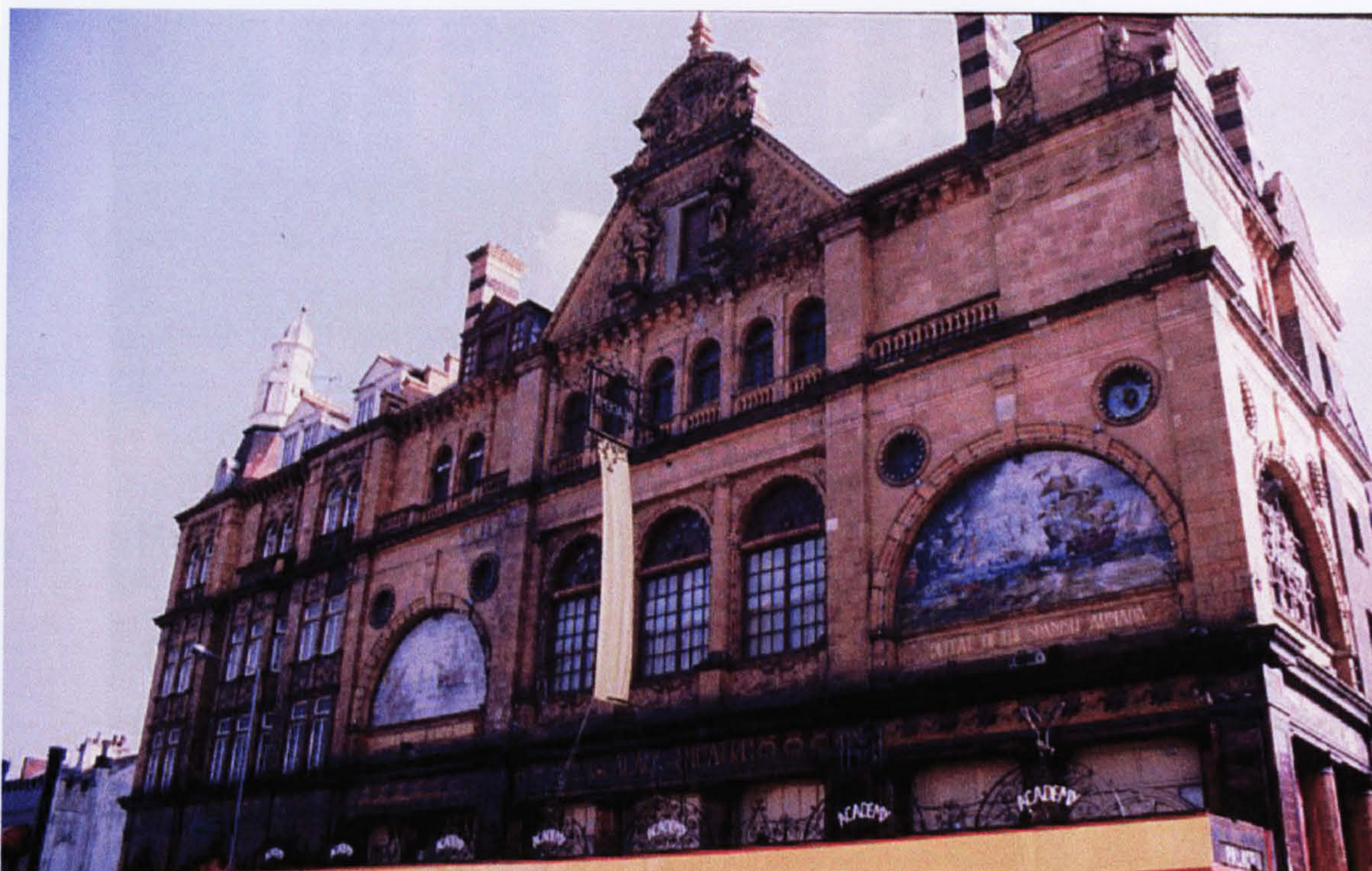


Plate 7.84. Front elevation of the New Palace Theatre.



Plate 7.85. The ceramic fascia of the New Palace Theatre.



Plate 7.86. Detail of the ceramic fascia of the hotel adjoining the New Palace Theatre.



Plate 7.87. Decorative motifs.

Architect, the majority of the ceramic decoration found on the outside of the structure can be definitely attributed to Neatby, both on stylistic grounds and the incidence of figure types that occur as almost identical panels, signed, in other locations.

Plates 7.85-7.87 show three views of the fascia strip along the front of the building which displays the names of the hotel and theatre. Both the calligraphic style and the use of abstract art nouveau inspired motifs marks the work out as being that of Neatby. The abstract motifs are particularly characteristic and are unlikely to have been employed by any other of the Doulton designers at this time. The friezes of tube-lined and relief-moulded galleons, one at ground floor level and one at the top of the building, shown in Plates 7.88-7.89, are also likely to be his work. The galleon was one of the motifs associated with the arts and crafts movement being an example of sound construction and the idea of everything being 'ship-shape' or reliable. Neatby was to return to the theme of galleons for a series of murals that he painted for the Imperial Hotel, London in 1907-08.

The most archetypal examples of Neatby's work are, however, to be found in the spandrels at the top of the main series of windows on the first floor of the theatre, Plate 7.90. These panels which show confronting mermaids bending forwards in a manner that compliments the line of the window arch, are almost identical precursors of a pair of mermaids that were used by him in a design for the City Wholesale Market, Leicester (see below), signed and dated for the year 1900. Although the Leicester figures are stylistically more developed they and the Plymouth examples share the same forward leaning pose with arms outstretched and the 'fin skirt' around



Plate 7.88. Ceramic frieze of galleons around the lower part of the theatre exterior.



Plate 7.89. Relief moulded terracotta frieze around the upper level of the theatre.



Plate 7.90. Spandrel decoration of mermaids on the first floor windows of the theatre.



Plate 7.91. Art Nouveau style mermaid window apron in terracotta.

the hips. There can be no doubt of the authorship of the Plymouth mermaids. Further evidence of the mermaid theme can be seen in the apron-panels below the same set of first floor windows, Plate 7.91. Here, a central female head rises out of the sea between two confronting dolphins. The curvi-linear 'whiplash' arrangement of her long hair mirrors the stylized waves at the bottom of the composition in the tradition of Continental art nouveau. If the artist was not known, stylistically it would be impossible to tell that the work was English and not French. As such, the design is one of his most pure exercises in the Art Nouveau style.

Higher still, above the second-floor windows, a frieze of relief-moulded female heads bounded by sinuous plant stems, Plate 7.92, appears very similar to the treatment given to similar forms on the capitals of the columns in the Manchester Art School. Heart-shaped objects hang from this foliage and this motif is reflected in the decoration applied to window aprons on the Great Western Hotel section of the facade. Plate 7.93 shows examples of this design. The configuration of the design bears marked similarities to paintings and drawings produced by Charles Rennie Mackintosh, and Margaret and Frances Macdonald in Glasgow in the early to mid-1890s. Their works are frequently based on a circular focus whereas here, Neatby uses a heart-shaped device. However, both categories bear a striking resemblance to the female reproductive system and as such carry sexual associations⁷⁶. This connection with the regenerative process is further strengthened by the two heart-shaped 'seed pods' that are suspended from either side of the main body of the motif. The heart shapes themselves may

⁷⁶ For discussion of the Glasgow School works in this vein see Brett, D. : *C.R. Mackintosh - The Poetics of Workmanship* (London : Reaktion Books, 1992), p. 63.

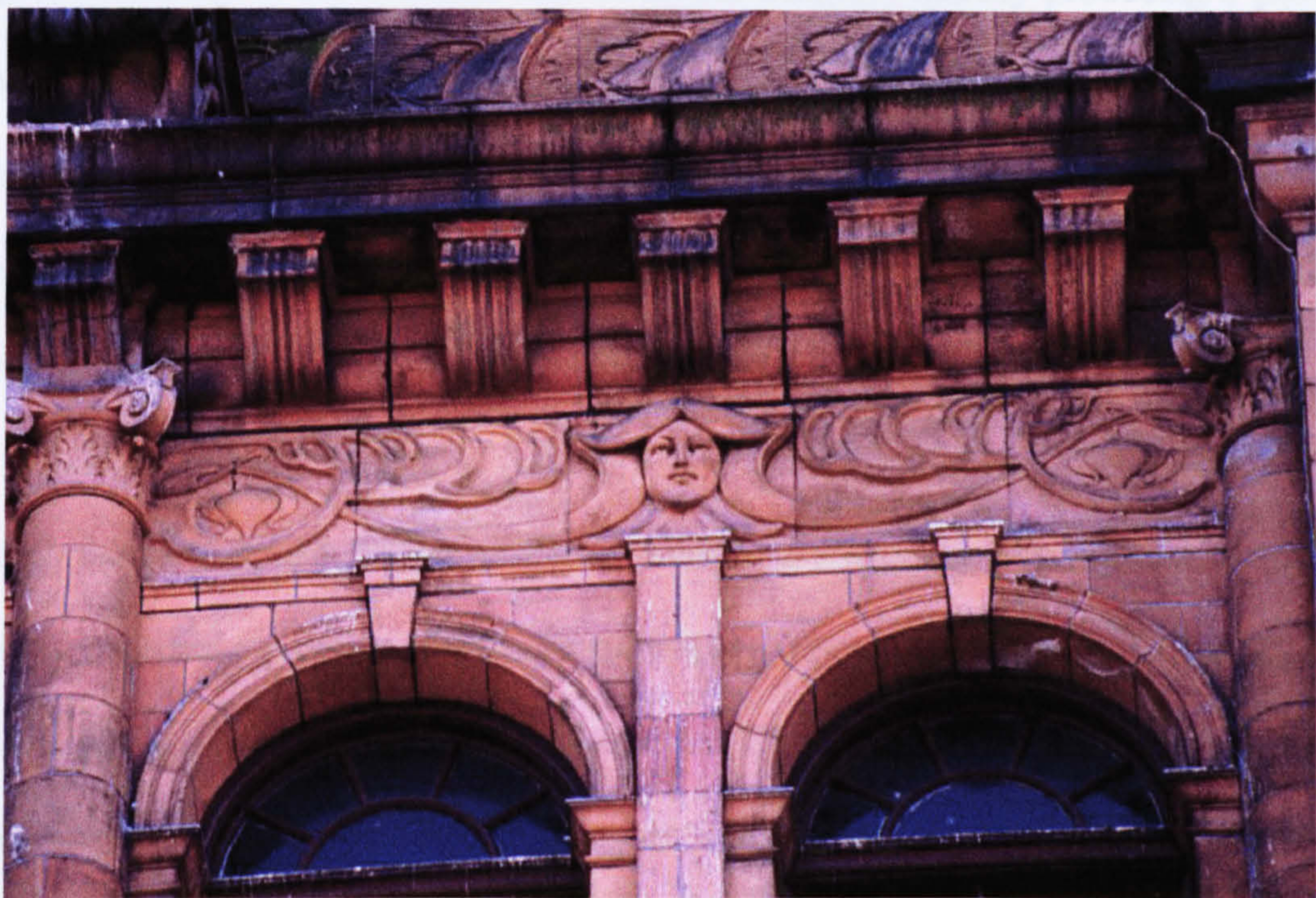


Plate 7.92. Part of a frieze of female heads above the second floor windows of the theatre.



Plate 7.93. Unusual Art Nouveau style window aprons on the Hotel.

suggest something of the romantic side of sexual imagery, thereby producing a powerful message. Direct sexual imagery of this type, although symbolic, is unusual in Neatby's work at this date and may have a wider rather than specific meaning, perhaps acting as a metaphor for Nature. Whether or not such symbolism is appropriate for the exterior decoration of hotel bedrooms is debatable.

Overall, the New Palace Theatre project represents a continuing development in Neatby's stylistic growth and a rejection of revivalist architectural practices. Onto a somewhat historicist facade which is as stylistically theatrical as it is eclectic he was able to inject a range of designs that conveyed the latest European artistic styles. Whereas at Blackpool and Gosforth he used a two-dimensional format, at Plymouth he was able to achieve a similar artistic statement through the medium of terracotta bas-reliefs.

Presumably at the same time as he was supervising the design and the finishing of the terracotta for Plymouth, Neatby was also working on a large scheme of decoration for the new City Arcades in Birmingham. Although only a small section of this much bigger building project now remains, enough survives to indicate the original character of this extensive retail complex which was designed by the Birmingham partnership of Newton and Cheadle, and constructed in red brick and terracotta.

Although impressive, the Birmingham City Arcades project is unusual among Neatby's known works at this date as it marked a partial return to his earlier Classical revival style. The reason

for this probably rests not with Neatby but with the architects themselves and the environment in which they worked. In an age when mass communication was defined by the newspaper, often the local press, and long distance travel relied upon the railways, a city like Birmingham possessed a distinct identity. The nonconformist liberal socio-political milieu that coloured almost all aspects of life in late 19th-century Birmingham had produced a society that was hard-working, prosperous and religious yet sympathetic to new movements in art and architecture. However, the city did not enjoy the cosmopolitan spirit of London and architectural styles, for example, tended to be associated both philosophically and materially with the Gothic in the 1870s and 1880s and, also to an extent, with a revival of Italian Renaissance themes⁷⁷. When tastes did start to change in the 1890s the citizens of Birmingham found the Englishness of the arts and crafts movement more to their liking and what exuberance there was in their architecture stemmed more from the free integration of Gothic, Classical and vernacular elements rather than with Continental art nouveau. Neatby's scheme of decoration for the City Arcades was one such exercise in conservative eclecticism and was undoubtedly designed in close co-operation with Newton and Cheate who understood local architectural taste. However, despite not being as progressive as some of his other design schemes at this period, the building drew the attention of the artistic press and was illustrated in both the *Artist* and the *Studio*⁷⁸.

⁷⁷ Granelli, R. : 'Architecture - All the World and Time Enough', in Crawford, A. (Ed.) : *By Hammer and Hand. The Arts and Crafts Movement in Birmingham* (Birmingham : City Museums and Art Gallery, 1984).

⁷⁸ I.B. : 'Designers' Jottings', *The Artist*, xxviii, (1900), p. 107; Vallance, Aymer : 'Mr W.J. Neatby and His Work', *Studio*, xxix (1903), p. 116.

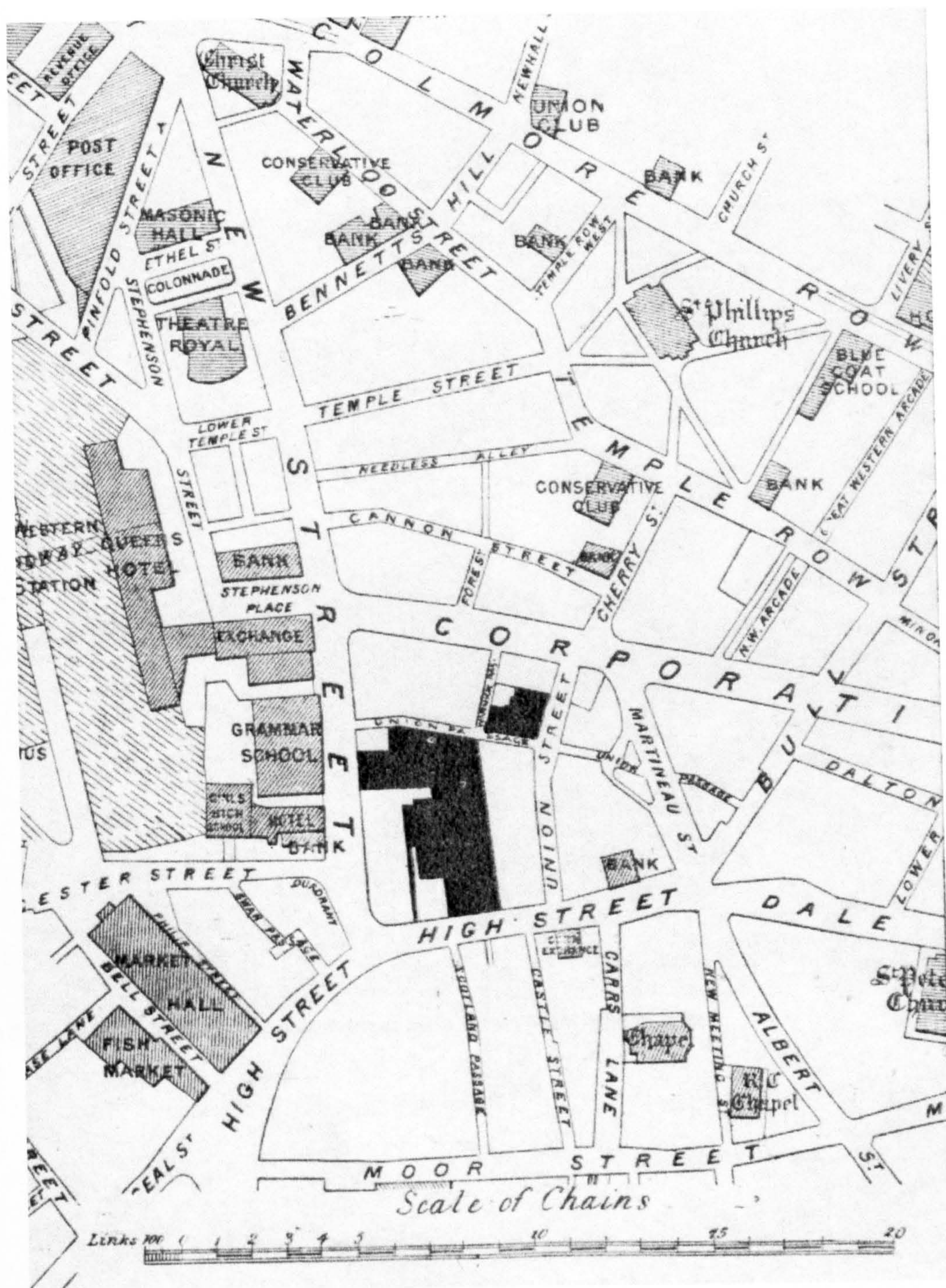


Plate 7.94. Map of central Birmingham showing the site of the City Arcade shaded in black.

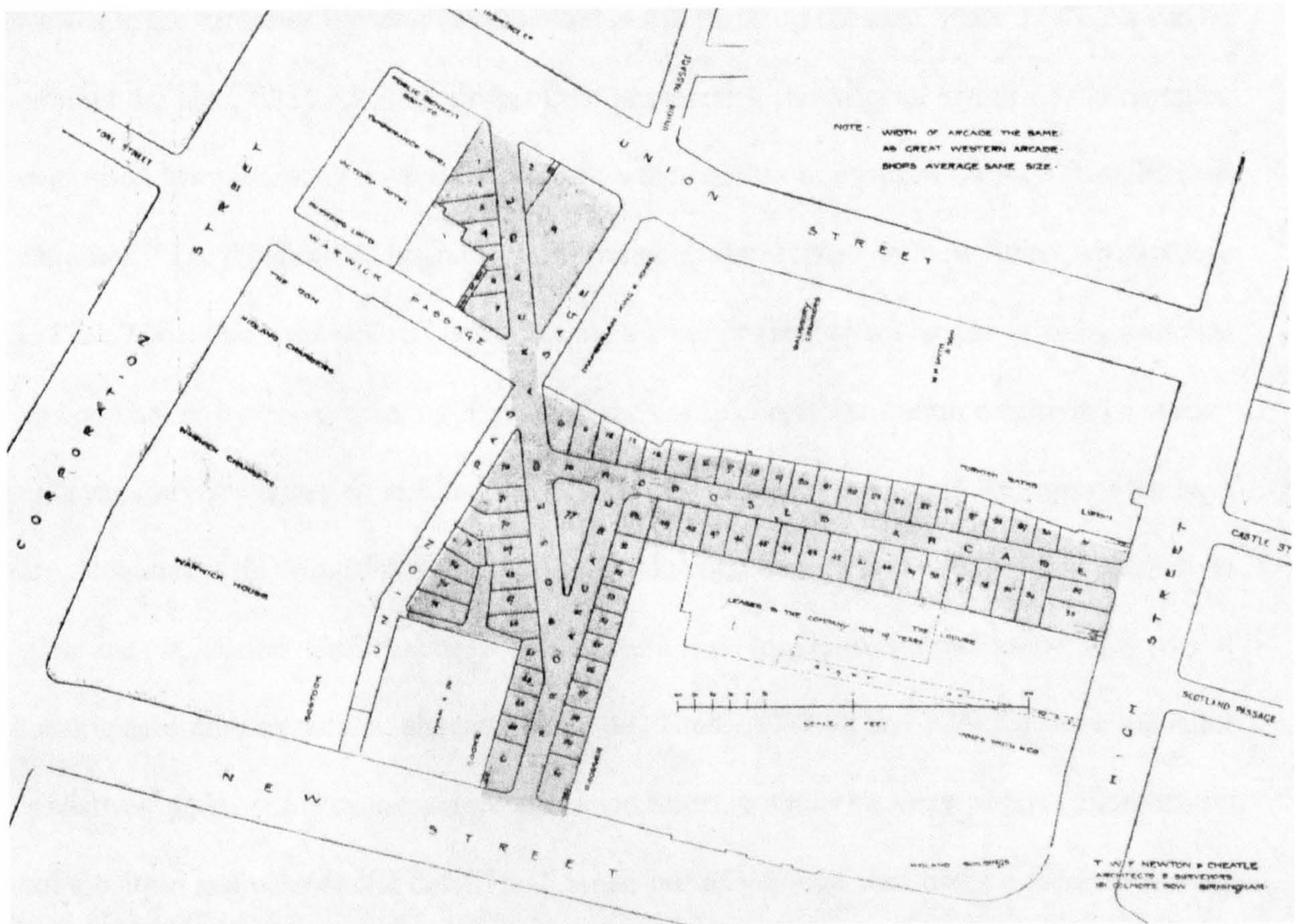


Plate 7.95. Plan of the City Arcades Project from the Prospectus.

The scheme was launched with the publication of a prospectus on behalf of the City Arcades Company on 7th December, 1897; it names Newton and Cheate as the architects and outlines the potential for the proposed retail outlets in the city centre.⁷⁹ The arcades complex was located in the centre of Birmingham (marked out in black on the map, Plate 7.94). As can be seen on the plan, Plate 7.95, taken from the prospectus, the original layout of the complex comprised several linking covered arcades to which access was gained through five different entrances.⁸⁰ The prospectus illustrates the entrance to the arcades on New Street, shown here as Plate 7.96. This artist-drawn elevation shows a rather flamboyant facade utilizing a central section flanked by two projecting bays, with the considerable decoration employing a variety of devices largely derived from Renaissance motifs. The main section and the tops of the bays are decorated with winged figures and the whole composition is topped by a Flemish-style gable and two domes. Unfortunately this structure is no longer extant and today, only two of the original entrances remain, illustrated here as Plates 7.97-7.98 and 7.99. Of these the latter is relatively plain but the main entrance, on Union Street, is a *tour de force* of both architectural composition and ornamental detail, and, while not as ostentatious, bears a similarity to the proposed New Street elevation. The symmetrical facade comprises a large centrally placed archway, infilled with glass in the upper segment, bounded by two projecting bays. On the ground floor these bays are somewhat larger and house shop fronts; above they continue for two floors as large 16th-17th-century style windows while at third floor level they project

⁷⁹ *City Arcades, Birmingham Limited (The)* (Birmingham : City Arcades, Birmingham, Limited, 1897); prospectus held in the Reference Library, Birmingham (243102) L/P 47.14.

⁸⁰ Carr, J. Miller : 'Terra-cotta, Constructional Faience, and Ceramic Mural Decoration', *British Architect*, lix (1903), p.325.



NEW ST. FRONTAGE.

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Plate 7.96. The City Arcades, artist's impression of the New Street entrance.



Plate 7.97. City Arcades, Union Stree entrance.



Plkate 7.98. Union Street, Birmingham, showing the entrance to the remaining section of the City Arcades.



Plate 7.99. City Arcades, secondary entrance.

above the roof of the building as dome-capped attic rooms. Between the bays, at second-floor level, a blank expanse of flat brickwork is punctuated by a centrally placed five-light window, while above a high Flemish-style gable completes the arrangement of the elevation. Architectural detailing and ornament, comprising oddly placed pilasters, zoomorphic friezes and terminal musician figures give the structure an English Renaissance Mannerist character and define it in terms more applicable to Neatby's Cornhill facade than his more recent creations in Manchester and Blackpool. It can also be suggested that in the basic configuration of its main architectural elements this facade echoes that of Charles Harrison Townsend's Bishopsgate Institute, London, built in 1892-94.

Considering examples of Neatby's terracotta ornament individually, perhaps the most notable feature is the collection of piper figures, two to each bay, that connect the second floor windows to the third-floor pavilions. These figures, Plates 7.100-7.101, fashioned as grotesque, bearded caryatides are a direct reference to Doulton's earlier work for George and Peto at 52 Cadogan Square, London (1886). The figures, legless torsos mounted on square-section bases in the manner of terms, are not as accomplished nor as ornamented as the earlier Cadogan Square musicians. Here, the terracotta figures are modelled in the round and carry metal pipes or trumpets. They have well developed musculature and detailed facial features including prominent eyebrow ridges. However, they are by no means as varied in their poses nor are they as ornamented as the earlier series of figures although this latter feature can perhaps be explained by changing fashions and the passage of time. Nevertheless, the Birmingham musicians do, once again, confirm Neatby's talent as a sculptor.



Plate 7.100. City Arcades, Birmingham, musician figures on the facade of the Union Street entrance.

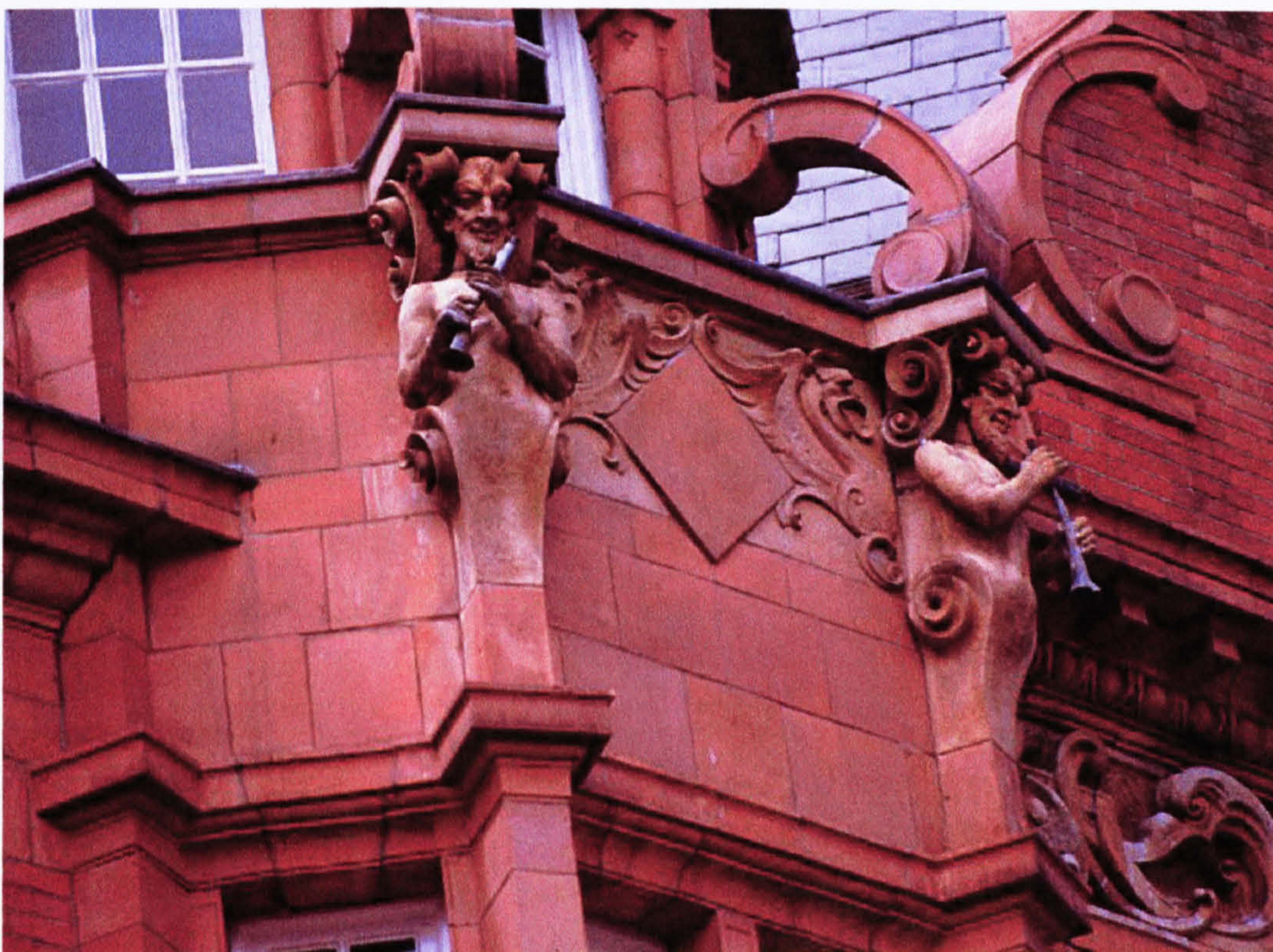


Plate 7.101. City Arcades, Birmingham, musician figures on the facade of the Union Street entrance.



Plate 7.102. City Arcades, second floor window and decorative frieze, Union Street entrance.



Plate 7.103. City Arcades, decorative details, Union Street facade.



Plate 7.104. City Arcades detail of frieze of grotesque creatures, Union Street entrance.

Plate 7.102 shows the upper sections of the centrally positioned second floor window topped by a series of segmental recesses containing stylized shell ornaments. Between this window and that above, within the third-floor gable, is an entablature containing a frieze of sea monsters or dragons. In a detailed view of this entablature, Plate 7.103, the architrave can be seen to be somewhat plain. However, above it the cornice is supported by a series of finely modelled mutules above an ovolo of egg and dart ornament, rendered in the finest classical tradition. Between these two extremities a frieze of grotesque sea creatures interspersed with tridents completes the entablature. In terms of individual motifs this composition is more calculated in its references to classical architecture than most of Neatby's works but even here, the transformation of naturalistic sea creature forms into conventionalized strapwork indicates his deference to English Renaissance forms. The concept of the sea creatures is also duplicated in the spandrels to either side of the main central archway, as can be seen in Plate 7.104, where pairs of confronting creatures form the openings to what appear to be a series of ventilation ducts. Interestingly, these are also associated with Mannerist features comprising completely purposeless (other than for decoration) pilasters and lozenge motifs.

As interesting as all the features above may be, it was the rather androgynous modelled head shown in Plate 7.105, that was chosen for illustration by both the *Artist* and the *Studio* to define Neatby's work on this project. This finely modelled terra-cotta bust is located on the right-hand side of the facade, see Plate 7.97, where it acts as an apron below the second storey window. The head protrudes from a deep lozenge shaped frame which is set within a rectangular scroll-

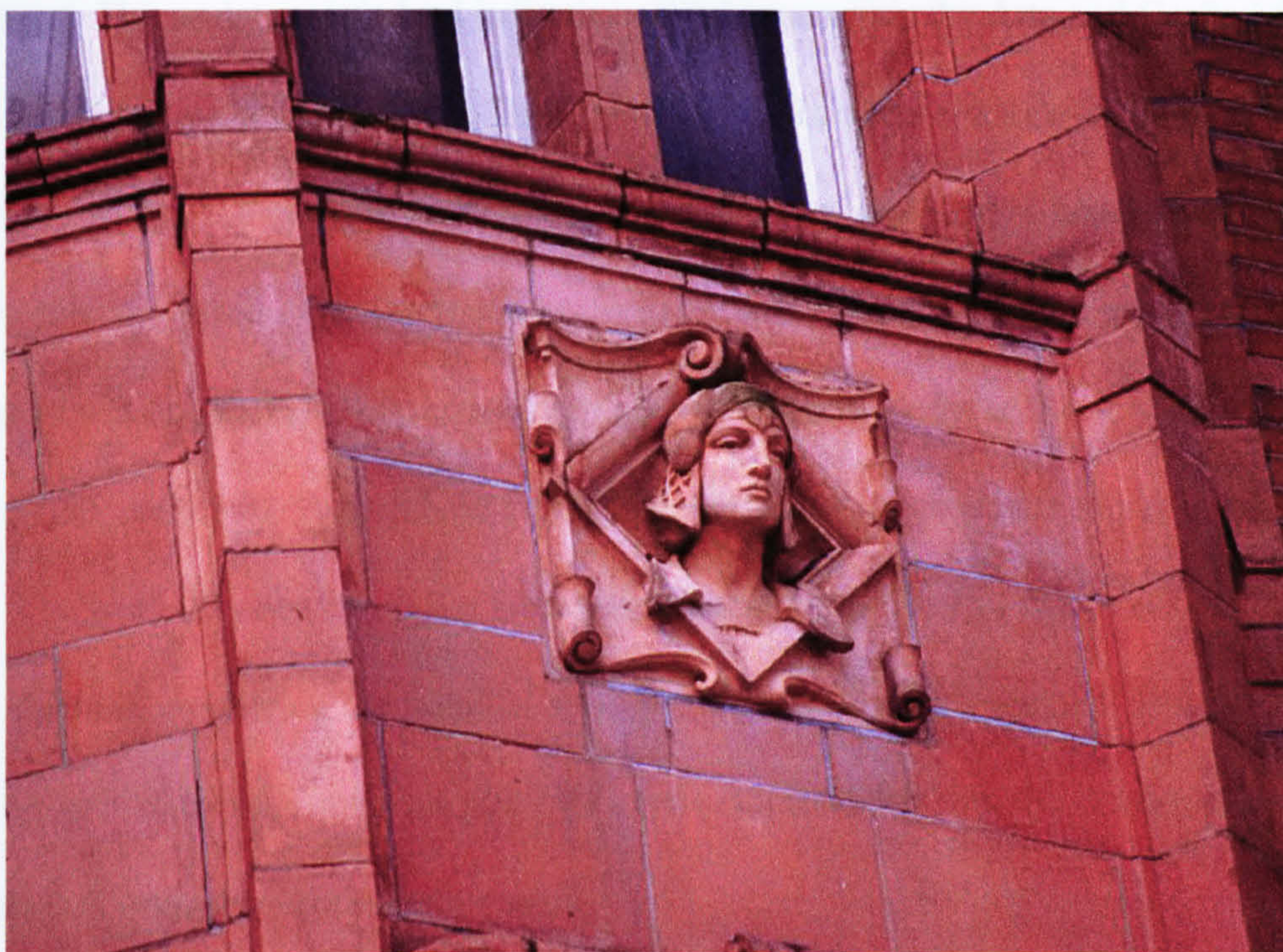


Plate 7.105. City Arcades, Renaissance-style head on the facade of the Union Street entrance.

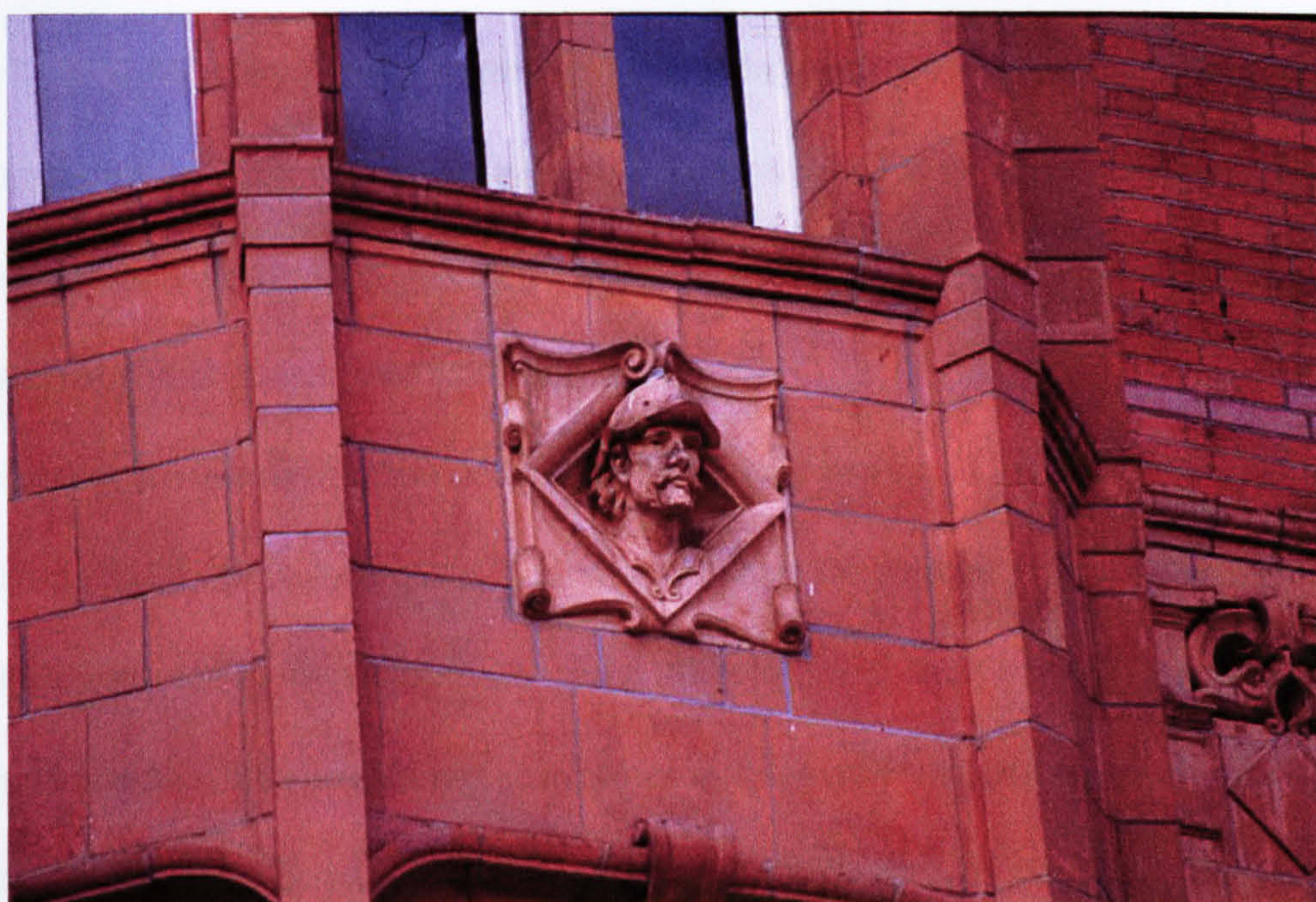


Plate 7.106. City Arcades, head of soldier on Union Street facade.

work panel. This sculpture is indeed indicative of fashions within the Arts and Crafts Movement and its love of arcane forms of dress. The individual wears a Renaissance-style head-dress and, on the torso, a wide-necked smocked blouse. On the forehead a heart-shaped device is prominently displayed. The portrayal is certainly not related to Continental Art Nouveau iconography but typifies English contemporary *avant-garde* styles in being historicist without being specific and mysterious without being threatening; in other words escapist and above all cosy. The head is balanced on the corresponding left-hand bay of the facade with a similar panel, this one containing the head of a young soldier wearing a helmet, Plate 7.106. Both works show Neatby's consummate skill as a terra-cotta modeller, but the first mentioned of the two heads is undoubtedly the better work.

Plates 7.107-7.112 show Neatby's ceramic designs for the interior of the arcades. Here a series of shop fronts of uniform dimensions was decorated with ceramic ornament. Each shop window was divided from the next by a ceramic pilaster and above the whole ran an ornamental parapet, composed of entwined grotesques and strapwork, punctuated at regular intervals by small domed pavilions. The material chosen for this scheme was a Doulton green-glazed faience called *malachite*⁸¹. In stylistic terms the motifs used on the interior complement those used on the exterior, producing an architectural whole. Although, in the use of specific forms it differed, in overall concept, this project has similarities with Neatby's slightly later work at the Royal Arcade, Norwich, and must have been a useful testing ground for ideas used in the latter

⁸¹ Carr, J. Miller : *Op cit.*, p. 325.



Plate 7.107. City Arcades, interior.



Plate 7.108. City Arcades, shop units.



Plate 7.109. City Arcades, decorative ceramic parapet above shop front.



Plate 7.110. City Arcades, detail of ceramic parapet design.



Plate 7.111. City Arcades, decorative pavilion on parapet.

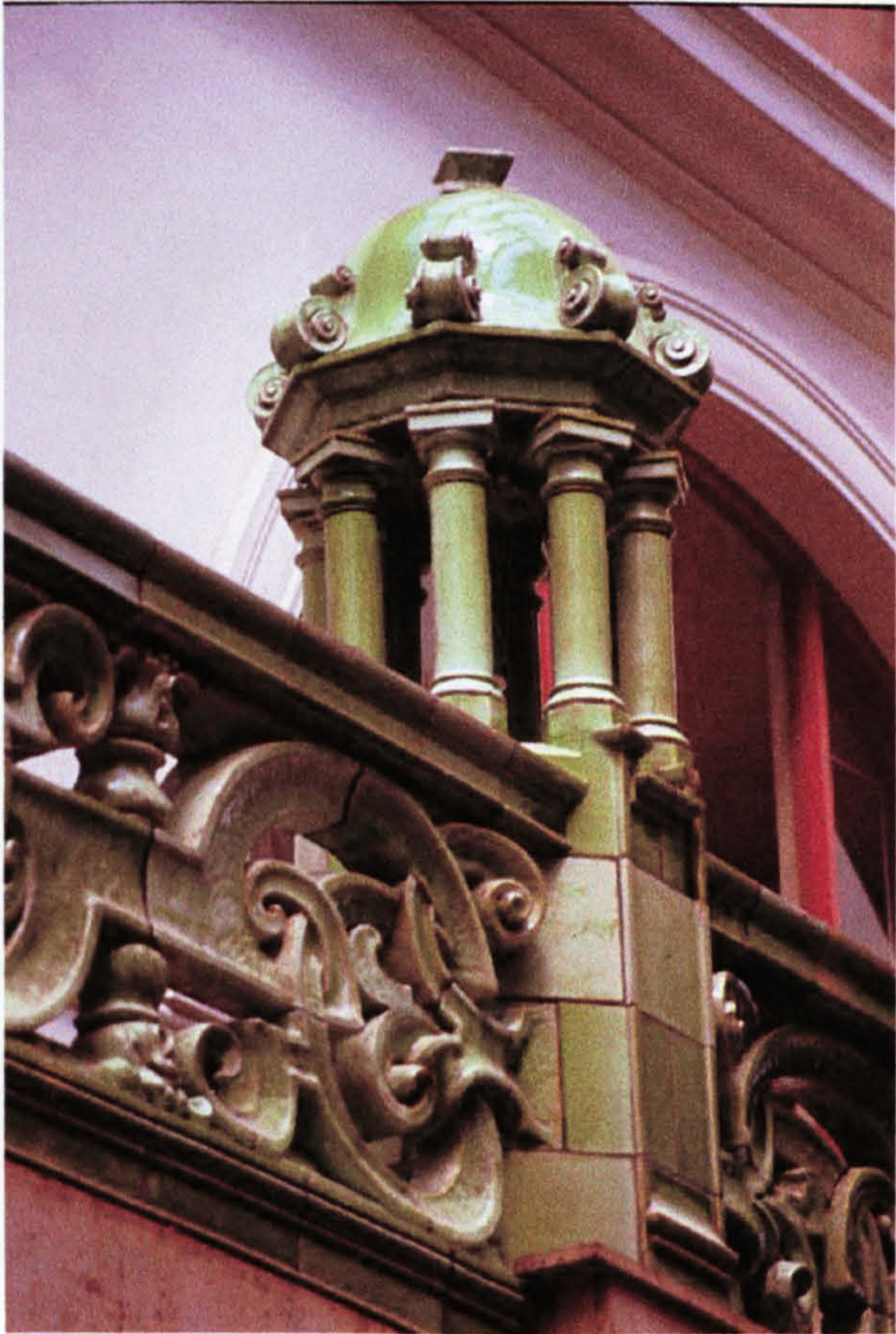


Plate 7.112. Detail of pavilion structure.



• INTERIOR • VIEW •

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Plate 7.113. City Arcades, artists impression of the interior taken from the official prospectus (1897).

project.

Interestingly, an artist's impression of the interior of the arcades is also included in the original prospectus for the scheme and is reproduced here as Plate 7.113. This drawing, dating from sometime before December 1897, looks very similar to the extant section of the City Arcades today, including most noticeably the parapet above the shop fronts. The final arrangement was slightly different, on the parapet dragons were replaced by strapwork and the caps of the small domed pavilions are of a different shape, but it could be argued that the architects, rather than Neatby, played the major part in deciding upon the decorative details for the project. However, in the prospectus it is clearly stated that: 'A leading feature of the construction will be the use of glazed Terra-Cotta of various colours,' suggesting that from an early stage the architects were consulting with Doulton as to what was possible. If this is the case then much of the detail to be seen in the artist drawings of the facade elevation and the arcade interior was probably suggested by Neatby.

However, one of the most important features connected with his work in Birmingham at this time was the impression that he seems to have made on the architects of the City Arcades, Newton and Cheadle. Three years later when they were connected with a project for the King's Café at Birmingham, they chose Neatby to design the interior of the café in its entirety and it is most likely this commission that led to his departure from Doulton's and his establishment as an independent designer.

Another project that occupied Neatby during 1898 was the design for the facade of the Fox and



Plate 7.114. Facade of the Fox and Anchor public house, designed by Neatby (1898).

Anchor public house at number 114 Charterhouse Street, the City of London⁸². In their survey of London buildings, Bradley and Pevsner describe the Fox and Anchor as:

‘.... tall and narrow, with a joyful front of *Doulton’s* coloured tiles by *W.J. Neatby* of the firm. A picture of the fox fills a shaped gable ballooning upwards. The flattest of flat bays below, flanked by grinning gargoyles. Touches of Art Nouveau whiplash forms here and there. Recessed entrance to the long and dark interior, which has a top-lit labyrinth of little snugs at the back’⁸³.

Although the brevity of the account might be appreciated by those readers with interests less specific than those expressed here, the description of the building hardly does it justice and also contains inaccuracies. To deal with the latter, as can be seen on Plate 7.114, rather than being faced with tiles, the facade is constructed of Carraraware blocks, mostly off-white in colour but with some polychromatic elements, and often of complex shape. Additionally, although it has little bearing on Neatby’s contribution to the structure, the building is hardly large enough to qualify as labyrinthine.

The architect of the Fox and Anchor is not recorded but the association of Neatby with the facade is validated by his full signature which occurs on the gable mural and his initials which can be seen moulded into tile panels to either side of the recessed entrance. The date of the

⁸² Bradley, S. and Pevsner, N. : *The Buildings of England. London 1 : The City of London* (London : Penguin, 1997), pp. 118 and 454-455.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 454-455.



Plate 7.115. Fox and Anchor, upper facade.



Plate 7.116. Fox and Anchor, irregular shaped gable.

work, 1898, is recorded on the gable. The tall narrow three bay facade embraces a ground floor entrance and three upper floors, culminating in large round-topped gable. The central bay is the widest, comprising a rather Moorish-looking arch and recessed window on the first floor, a slightly bowed window on the second floor and a flat-faced four light window on the third. The original name-plate for the pub is situated just above the first floor archway and is executed in a typical Neatby script in white against a blue-green carraraware background, see Plate 7.115.

Considering the building in detail, starting at the top, Plates 7.116-7.117 show an overall and a detailed view of the gable. This rather unusual shaped feature is bounded by a raised and scrolled border which appears to be supported by two slender uprights attached to the face of the building. Within this border a large flat area is painted with a stylized tree, with blue branches and green leaves, and leaning against the tree trunk a brown fox and an anchor coloured blue with a brown rope attached. Amidst the scene the date 1898 is boldly displayed and at the bottom of the panel, as can be seen in the detailed view, are the words 'DOULTON Lambeth 1898', on the left, and 'WJ Neatby' on the right. The composition is typical of Neatby's Art Nouveau designs of the period.

On the second floor, the protruding bay window is protected by a wide hood or architrave that runs right across the facade between the second and third floor levels. As can be seen in the space between this and the top of the windows several decorative panels continue the art nouveau theme. The central window of the bay is topped by a balloon like design similar in shape to the main roof gable. However, to either side of this motif are images of Art Nouveau



Plate 7.117. Detail of painted gable showing Doulton marks and Neatby's signature at the base of the design.



Plate 7.118. Projecting sculptured Fox figures located just above the original pub fascia.

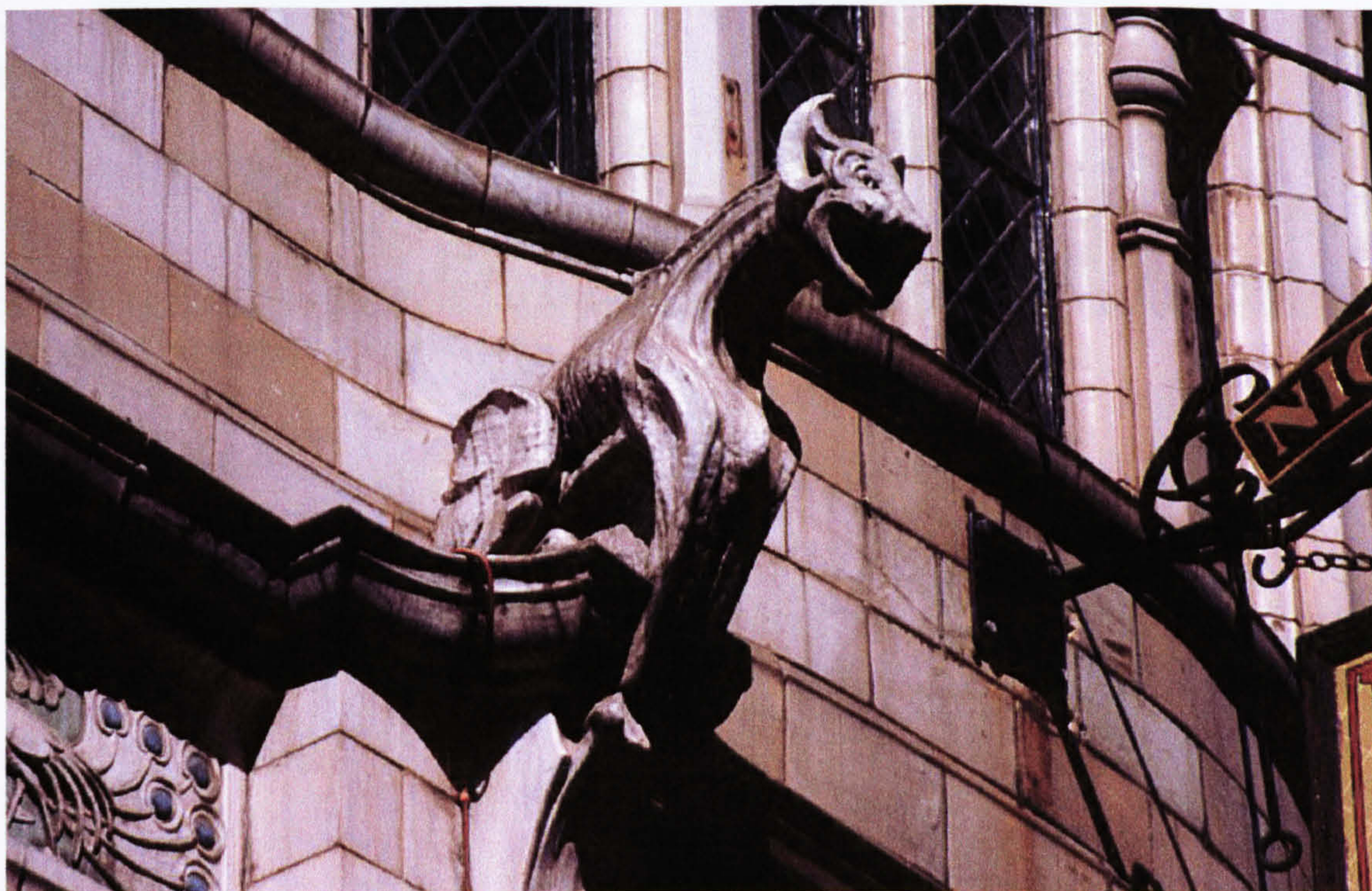


Plate 7.119. Detail of projecting Fox figure showing the textured surface of the ceramic sculpture.



Plate 7.120. Carraraware 'Peacock' panel.



Plate 7.121. Fox and Anchor, Art Nouveau polychromatic carraraware pilaster panel by Neatby.



Plate 7.122. Detail of pilaster capital.

women with whiplash hair-styles. On the side panels of the main bay window similar relief-moulded female heads confront one another to either side of a central vegetal device, not unlike some of his designs at Plymouth. On the equivalent panels above the windows located to either side of the central bay deeply carved panels illustrate single full-face male heads centrally placed within an arrangement of long, swirling curvilinear leaves.

Standing on platforms, created by expansions in a similar architrave that separates the first and second floor levels, two stylized Carraraware sculptures of foxes protrude to either side of the pub sign. These rather comical figures, shown in Plates 7.118-7.119, appear similar to Mediaeval gargoyles, and Neatby appears to have gone to some pains to create an effect appropriate to the nature of the building. Below and between them is the original Carraraware pub sign and at the same level, to either side, above the first floor windows are moulded panels of confronting peacocks, similar to those that Neatby used the following year at the Royal Arcade, Norwich, see Plate 7.120. Below these peacocks, centrally placed within a range of intricately jointed Carraraware blocks, is a small moulded male head.

To either side of the ground floor entrance a buff coloured terracotta pilaster displays a polychrome Carraraware panel containing a stylized Art Nouveau flower, Plate 7.121, with a capital designed as hooded male head within a scrolling leaf motif border, Plate 7.122. Inside, to either side of the recessed entrance, ceramic panels of stylized trees support the name of the pub set within a rectangular panel, Plate 7.123, and in the corner of each panel are the moulded initials 'WJN', Plate 7.124.



Plate 7.123. Ceramic pub sign on the wall just inside the outer entrance.



Plate 7.124. Neatby's initial on bottom left-hand side of the ceramic pub sign shown above.

Neatby's decorative scheme for the Fox and Anchor is seemingly the first in a small series of brightly coloured Carraraware structures, often with Moorish stylistic features, that he was to be associated with up to 1901. These buildings, which include the Royal Arcade, Norwich (1899), the Turkey Café, Leicester (1900) and the Everard Building, Bristol (1901), are characterized by their exotic appearances and extensive use of cream/off-white Carraraware used as a back-drop for polychromatic, often moulded, Carraraware decorative elements. As with the Fox and Anchor, these buildings utilize Art Nouveau motifs: curvilinear forms; female heads; stylized flowers and trees; informal calligraphic scripts for name plates. In this series, the Fox and Anchor is Neatby's earliest recorded work of this type which combines both style and materials to such striking aesthetic effect to produce a basic prototype from which the later schemes of decoration evolve.

As important as the Fox and Anchor is as a paradigm, the most extensive of Neatby's creations in this idiom is the Royal Arcade, Norwich, opened in May of the following year, but presumably designed in 1898. This extensive project, structurally the work of the Norfolk architect George Skipper (1856-1948), comprised an arcade some 247 feet in length and containing twenty-four shop units. Initially envisaged as a brick-clad structure, at some point during 1898 Skipper made the decision to face his buildings in ceramic blocks and tiles and chose Doulton as the supplier⁸⁴. For the latter, Neatby took control of the project and provided

⁸⁴ Squires, N. F. : *The Royal Arcade, Norwich, 1897-99, by George Skipper. An historical appreciation and study* (1980), p.22.

the designs for the work, to be undertaken in Carraraware and Parian ware.

The resulting complex was a triumph for both men, architect and designer working in unison.

In speaking about this project in his review of Skipper's architecture Davis Jolley states:

'... the refined detailing of the shop fronts and the first-floor windows above, all this is excellently done. But Skipper decided to face his building with ceramic tiles, and here he is customarily given more credit than is strictly due to him. Certainly he had the discernment to employ W.J. Neatby for the job. Neatby ... had developed glazing techniques which enabled relatively bright colours to withstand weathering and so to be used externally. As regards the Royal Arcade, quite obviously the choice of facing material and decorative treatment was ultimately Skipper's, but the designs themselves were the work of Neatby - and it is the prominence they are given which brings to the Arcade such particular brio. ... And the broader decorative treatment of the exterior, when compared with Neatby's own major commission in this field, the Everard Building of 1901, leaves little doubt that the conception was very largely the decorator's, not the architect's'.⁸⁵

Clearly, Neatby had a good deal of influence on the overall appearance of the Arcade. It is the

⁸⁵ Jolley, D. : *Architect Exuberant: George Skipper 1856-1948* (1975), pp. 13-14.



Plate 7.125. Royal Arcade, Norwich, marketplace entrance.



Plate 7.126. Royal Arcade, Castle Street entrance.

most extensive of his works in polychromatic Carraraware and Parian and shows a broadening of ideas and growth of confidence, building on techniques used for the Fox and Anchor. When the Arcade opened it was described as, ‘... a fragment from the Arabian Nights dropped into the heart of the old city’,⁸⁶ and combines Neatby’s recently acquired penchant for Moorish design with the architectural stylistic rhetoric of art nouveau.

Plate 7.125 shows the main entrance to the Royal Arcade, where it leads off from the main marketplace in Norwich. Here, Skipper retained most of the original building facing the market, only changing the ground floor entrance, where Neatby’s Moorish arches are eye-catching but do not conflict with overall architecture of the pre-existing buildings. This is in complete contrast with the rear or Castle Street entrance to the Arcade, Plate 7.126, which is perhaps the most imposing Art Nouveau facade in England. The construction, clad in Doulton’s Carraraware, masses a complex series of asymmetrical elements, Plate 7.127, around a high arched opening which comprises two horizontal elements, the lower supported by a single central column and the upper by an arcade of smaller balusters, below a lunette-shaped stained glass window. The conception is unconventional, even for an architect such as Skipper. The quarter-round bays to either side of the entrance seem to have been part of the original scheme as does the extension of the design to include an inn frontage⁸⁷ to the south of the archway. However, the very unusual first and second-floor projecting bay, shown in detail in Plate 7.128,

⁸⁶ Hallam, J.W. : *Souvenir of the Royal Arcade Norwich* (Norwich : Jarrold and Sons, 1899).

⁸⁷ This retail property had become a butcher’s shop at the time the photograph was taken. Although possibly appearing symmetrical on the photographs, the quarter-round bays mentioned above are unequal in their configurations, that on the north side of the entrance being much shallower in its curvature.

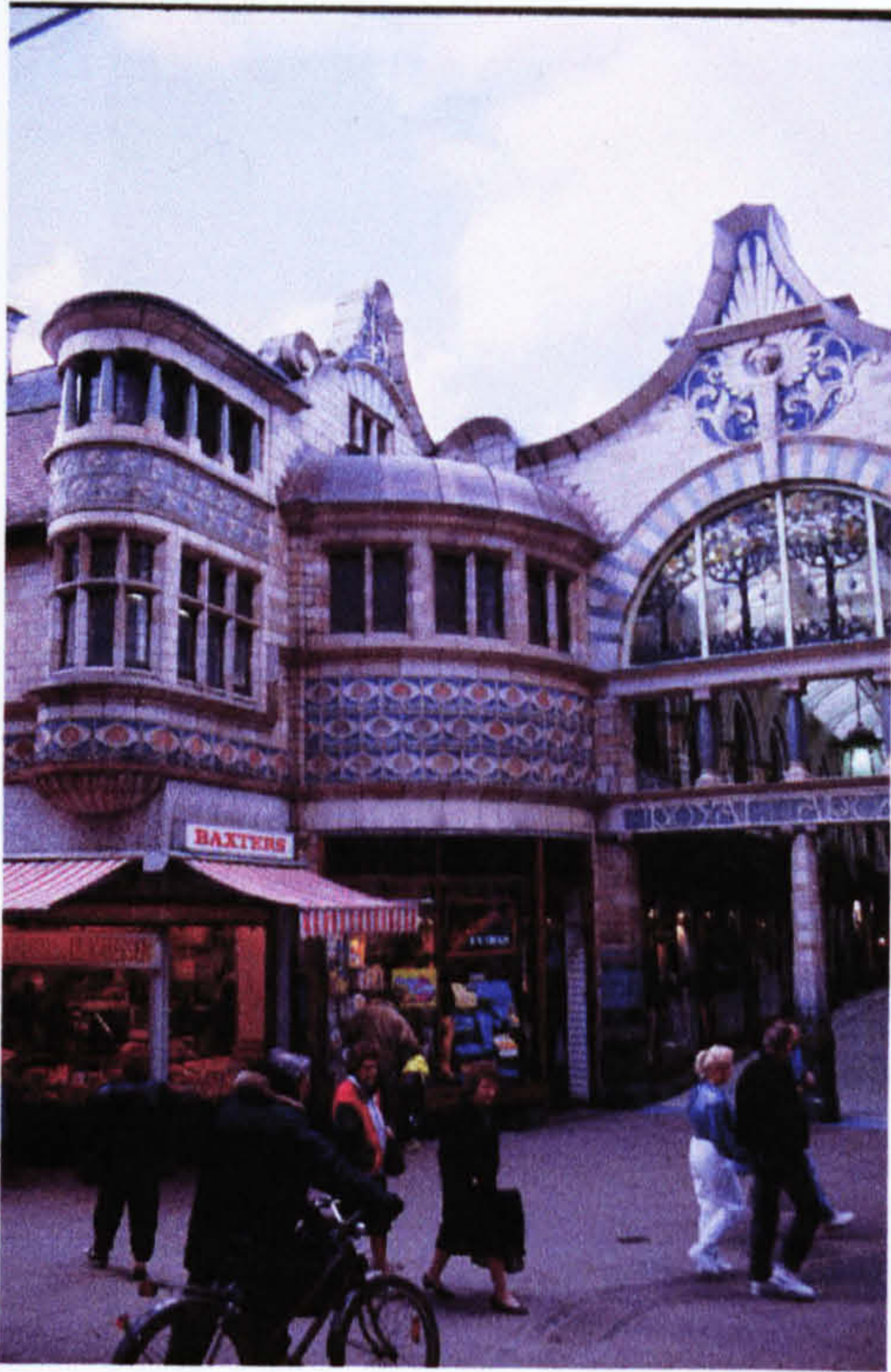


Plate 7.127. Massing of asymmetrical elements at Castle Street entrance.



Plate 7.128. Unusual projecting bay at Castle Street entrance.



Plate 7.129. Winged female head above Castle Street entrance.



Plate 7.130. Stained glass window filling the top section of the entrance arch, possibly designed by Neatby.

was only formally approved by the City Engineers Department on a plan drawn up as late as February 13th 1899, and may have been influenced by the more *avant-garde* Neatby.⁸⁸ This feature, reminiscent of later art-deco architecture gives the building an air of sea-side gaiety that would have been in keeping with projects already undertaken by Neatby.

This entrance characterizes the design theory for the entire complex and reveals a decorative philosophy that relies on elements of ornamentation to construct a cultural interface with the building and its users. The design, which betrays a sympathy with the ideas expressed in W.R. Lethaby's *Architecture, Mysticism, and Myth* (1891), if not directly, then with an empathetic understanding of symbolic devices, utilizes a range of motifs that are either immediately recognizable to the viewer or are stylized shapes that attract and reward attention. Of the former, the female figure is the most noticeable. Located in the unusually configured pediment above the entrance a female head framed by large white wings, Plate 7.129, fulfills several metaphorical functions. As an elevated winged spirit she symbolizes art and style, virtually sanctifying the act of shopping, yet as a female she is easily identifiable with each woman shopper, in terms of the patriarchal Victorian ideas of gender roles, the main *habitués* of shopping arcades. To modern eyes she may appear to represent the goddess of retail commerce but in the Victorian psyche the figure added an air of beauty and respectability to the structure. Below her the stained glass window design with its blossom-laden trees and doves, Plate 7.130, reminds viewers of the beauty of Nature and underlines the wholesome

⁸⁸ Skipper Plan 3688, Norwich City Council Architects Department.



Plate 7.131. Royal Arcade, Castle Street entrance showing Oriental decoration on central column.

Plate 7.132. View along the arcade of the Royal Arcade looking west.



Plate 7.132. View along the interior of the Royal Arcade looking west.



Plate 7.133. Royal Arcade, detail of shop front.



Plate 7.134. Detail of Doultton Parianware shop fascia decoration showing peacocks.



Plate 7.135. Detail of Doultton Parianware shop fascia decoration showing raised foliate scrollwork.

character of shopping.⁸⁹ Further female images, associated with signs of the Zodiac, occur at the centre of the arcade and throughout the complex painted peacocks appear, often associated with scrolling foliage, all images recognizable and acceptable to the public gaze.

Plate 7.131 shows a close-up of the Castle street entrance archway and Plate 7.132 shows a view along the main arcade. The arcade consists principally of a single east - west corridor with, at approximately half-way along its length, a shorter corridor joining it at a right angle from the south. The main corridor is lined with a series of standard format shop units such as that shown in Plate 7.133. Each of these shops carries a decorative Parianware panel, above the main window, displaying either confronting peacocks, Plate 7.134, or scrolling foliage, Plate 7.135. The designs are executed in a technique that delineates the main elements with a pronounced raised white line, allowing colour to be flooded into the resultant cells. The panels therefore seem to be tubelined, an advanced form of slip-trailing, but may be moulded to give the same effect. As a decorative device the peacock was very closely associated with the Aesthetic Movement, but retained its popularity with English decorative artists well into the early 20th century.

The short spur that joins the main arcade from the south is of interest stylistically. It contains the entrance to the Norwich Conservative Club, Plate 7.136. The wall and door surround at the entrance are of carraraware but the main sign for the Club is in Parianware, Plate 7.137, and

⁸⁹ Perhaps here is a visual reference to Lethaby's 'Jewel Bearing Tree', *Architecture, Mysticism, and Myth* (1891), Chapter V.



Plate 7.136. Royal Arcade, view of the south spur showing the Conservative Club entrance.



Plate 7.137. Close-up view of the Conservative Club name plate in Doulton Parianware by Neatby.

illustrates the influence of Art Nouveau sinuous forms on Neatby's design repertoire. In this design, although the main decorative motifs are stylized plants, the red-coloured oval motifs at either end of the name panel would seem to have some further significance. If, indeed, meaning was paramount in Neatby's mind, rather than simple pattern, then the two oval or egg-shaped motifs may relate to Lethaby's concepts of the 'centre', as the place where people gathered to worship or organise, as embodied in the representation of an omphalos or central stone that marks the navel or centre of the world, country or organisation. In *Architecture, Mysticism, and Myth*, Lethaby details the appearance of such stones in the ancient world and explains their associations with temples, thereby establishing links with architecture.⁹⁰ In primitive depictions, these stones are often surrounded by or decorated with foliage and the identification of the motifs on the name plate of the Norwich Conservative Club with these ancient symbols must be considered seriously.

The main focal point of the complex exists at the junction of the main arcade and its south arm. Here a slightly higher glass-domed section allows for further decoration on the inner faces of what is essentially a low square section tower, Plate 7.138. Here is the nucleus of Neatby's masterpiece. In the spandrels formed by the arches that support the raised dome, a series of female figures, each holding a single orb, represents a sign of the zodiac. Today the orbs no longer display their differing painted signs of the Zodiac, presumably having been 'over-cleaned', but a photograph of a cartoon for one of the spandrel paintings, Plate 7.139, taken in Neatby's studio and published in the *Artist* gives an impression of what the original designs

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, Chapter IV.



Plate 7.138. Royal Arcade, central dome with Zodiac figures.



Plate 7.139. Cartoon for one of the Zodiac figures as published in the *Artist* (1899).



Plate 7.140. Detail of spandrel decoration.



Plate 7.141. Detail of spandrel decoration in hand painted Doulton Parianware.

looked like.⁹¹

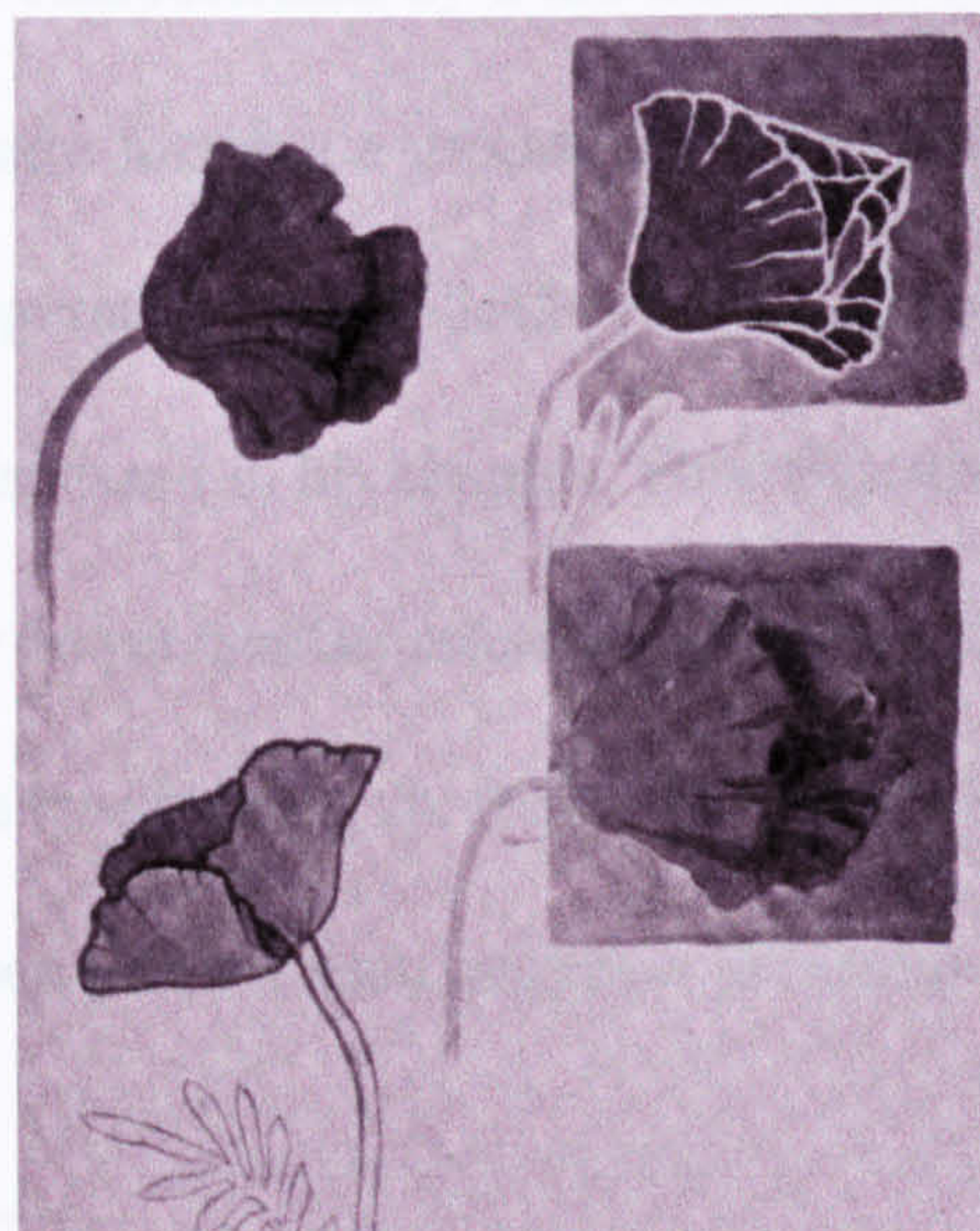
The Zodiac figures represent a further evolution in Neatby's stylistic development. Three of the figures are shown in Plates 7.140-142. Each figure is of a dark-haired woman, dressed in a loose fitting gown and holding a circular disc or orb. The dresses worn by the various figures vary in detail, but the most noticeable item of clothing worn by each is the ornate head-dress. These Renaissance-style caps differ from figure to figure as can be seen in the examples shown. They were a popular item of clothing used by artists in depictions of the Renaissance period and were to become a feature of Neatby's watercolour paintings in the early years of the 20th century.

In terms of stylistic development, the techniques of execution of these figures is interesting. As can be observed, particularly in Plate 7.142, the compositions were painted thickly in enamel colours onto Doulton Parianware, resulting in an uneven rippled surface. This differs from Neatby's Blackpool Winter Gardens figures which are painted very sparingly by comparison. Also, different from these latter works is the method by which the main forms and features are delineated. Until now, Neatby had been content to use a bold, dark-coloured outline to define his figures but at Norwich a move away from this rather traditional formula is seen, with the main lines being in white, or alternatively, it could be argued, absent. This may, once again, be due to the influence of Walter Crane. In his *Line and Form* (1900), he deals with the effects of a drawn object of one colour, outlined in a variety of ways, against different coloured

⁹¹ 'W.J. Neatby's work and a new process', *The Artist*, xxv (1899), p. 97.



Plate 7.142. Detail of painted spandrel decoration.



**Plate 7.143. Studies in form and colour
from Walter Crane's *Line and Form*
(1900)**

backgrounds. A sketch from his book, showing these effects is reproduced here as Plate 7.143.⁹² Although the book post-dates Neatby's work at Norwich, the content originated from lectures that Crane had given earlier at the Manchester Municipal School of Art and Neatby must have been familiar with his ideas on different forms of delineation. Conversely, the influence may not have come from Crane, but may have been a direct result of Neatby experimenting with stencilling, a form of decoration that was becoming increasingly widespread in the late Victorian period, attracting such advocates as Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Stencilling produces a similar effect to that seen with the Norwich figures and may provide a simple explanation for this development in Neatby's work.

As important as issues of formal construction are with the Norwich figures, so too are aspects concerned with stylization. Although the women themselves are stylized conceptions, more important in this area are the square objects that form a frieze along the top of each Zodiac panel. Each one of these is characterized by a tall thin white stalk topped by a white square within which is a green square forming a ground for a formation of six plum-coloured dots arranged in a triangular configuration. Symbolically, these may relate to Lethaby's ideas on the square and the pyramid as discussed in his chapter 'Four Square', in *Architecture, Mysticism, and Myth*. Equally well, they be yet another reference to Nature, this time depicted in an almost abstract manner as a square tree bearing six fruits. This is one of the most extreme examples of stylization in Neatby's repertoire, yet such treatment of natural forms is not restricted to him.

⁹² Crane, W. : *Line and Form* (reprint, London : G. Bell and Sons, 1902; originally published London : 1900), p. 257.



Plate 7.144. Writing cabinet by C.R, Ashbee (1902), showing details of the interior inlaid decoration. Photograph: courtesy of Cheltenham Museum and Art Gallery.



Plate 7.145. Detail of Ashbee cabinet door showing stylized flower heads. Photograph: courtesy of Cheltenham Museum and Art Gallery.

For example on a writing cabinet produced by C.R. Ashbee in 1902, Plates 7.144-145, the inside of the doors display inlaid designs of flower heads enclosed within a square. The resemblance to Neatby's earlier Norwich 'trees' is striking and may indicate an influence from one to the other.

The meaning of the iconography used in the decoration of the Royal Arcade, Norwich, defies conclusive interpretation. Some of the symbols such as the inverted heart shape, perhaps another form of stylized tree, which occurs at Norwich are part of the standard Neatby visual vocabulary and may serve little more purpose than as a suitable motif for a repeating pattern. In such a building as Norwich's 'fragment from the Arabian Nights', repeating patterns on the Islamic model are to be expected. However, other features are harder to explain. What, for example, do females holding astronomical orbs have to do with a shopping arcade ? Clearly, the building had a powerful symbolic meaning for Neatby, and perhaps for Skipper, but what it was remains a mystery. Lethaby's ambition that 'if we would have architecture excite an interest, real and general, we must have symbolism, immediately comprehensible by the great majority of spectators'⁹³ appears only to have been achieved on an aesthetic rather than psychological level at Norwich.

Continuing with the polychromatic Islamic theme, another building that is often ascribed to Neatby is the Turkey Café, Leicester (1900-01).⁹⁴ The facade, of the building designed by the

⁹³ Lethaby, W.R. : *Architecture, Mysticism, and Myth* (1891), p. 7.

⁹⁴ For a full account of this building see Farquhar and Skinner : *The History and Architecture of the Turkey Café* (1987).



Plate 7.146. Facade of the Turkey Café, Leicester by Arthur Wakerley.

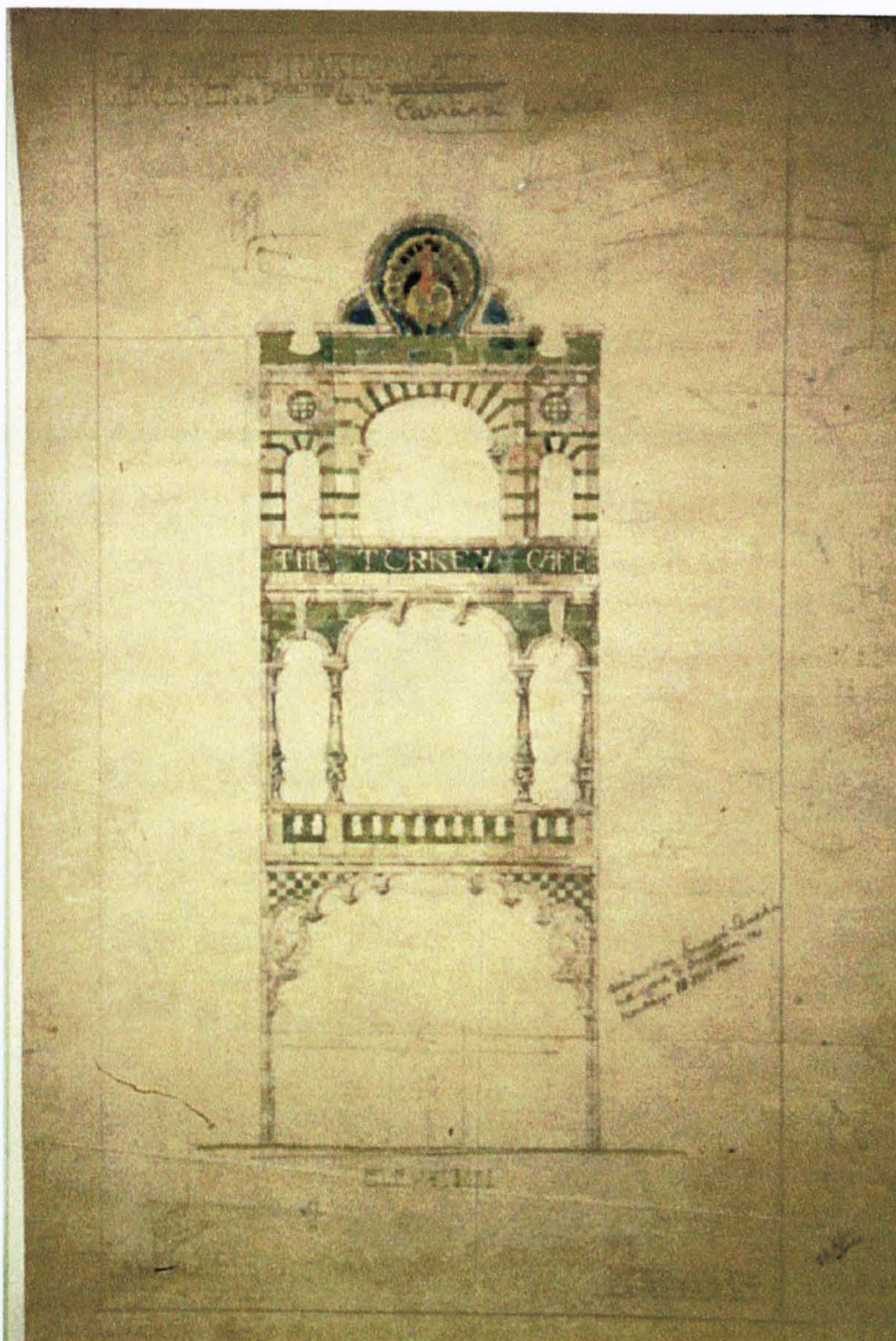


Plate 7.147. Turkey Café, front elevation drawing used by Doulton's Architectural Ceramics Department. Photograph: courtesy of Mr Christopher Sawday.



Plate 7.148. Detail of top corner of Plate 7.147

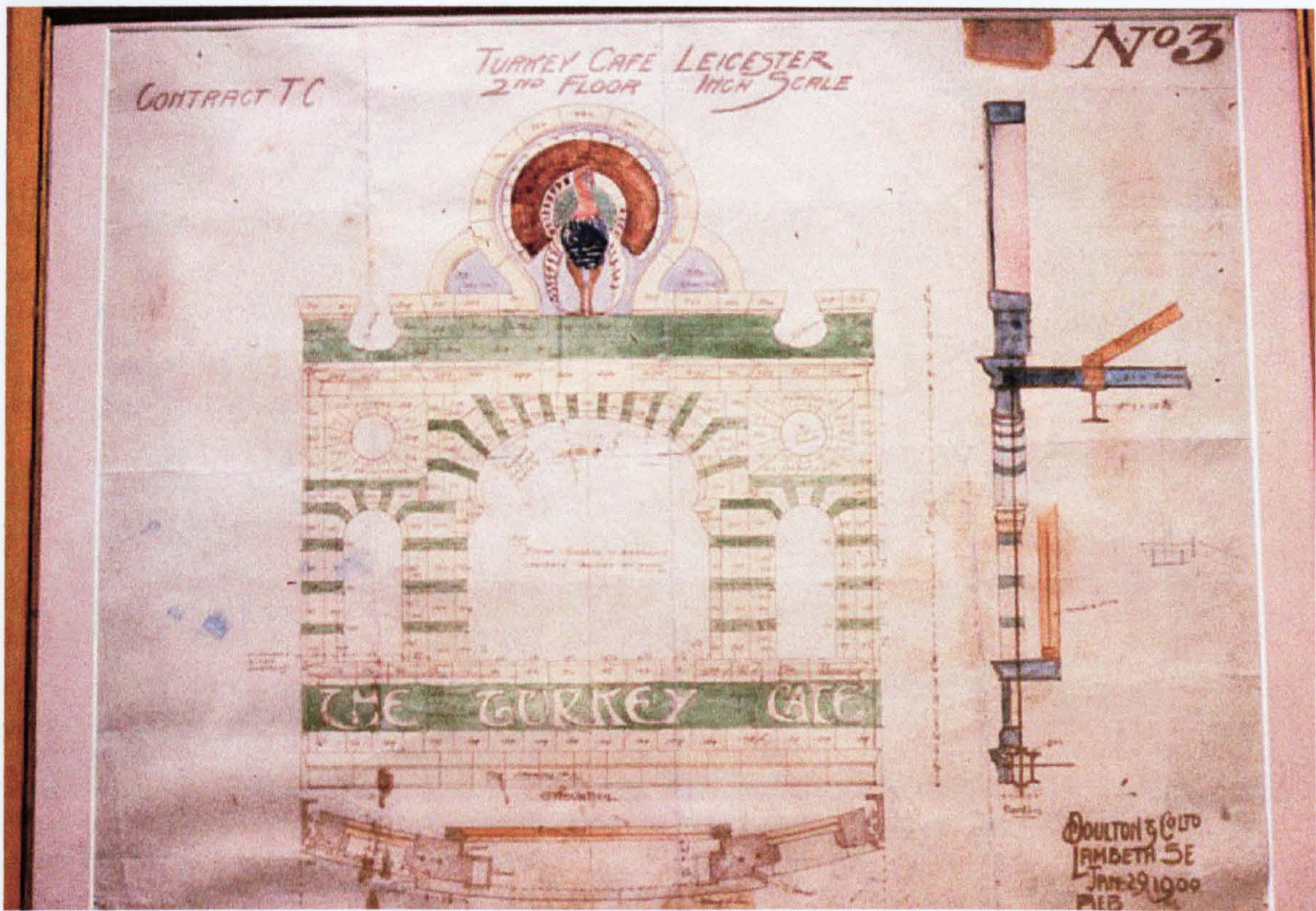


Plate 7.149. Turkey Café, Doulton elevation drawing showing numbered blocks and fixing details.

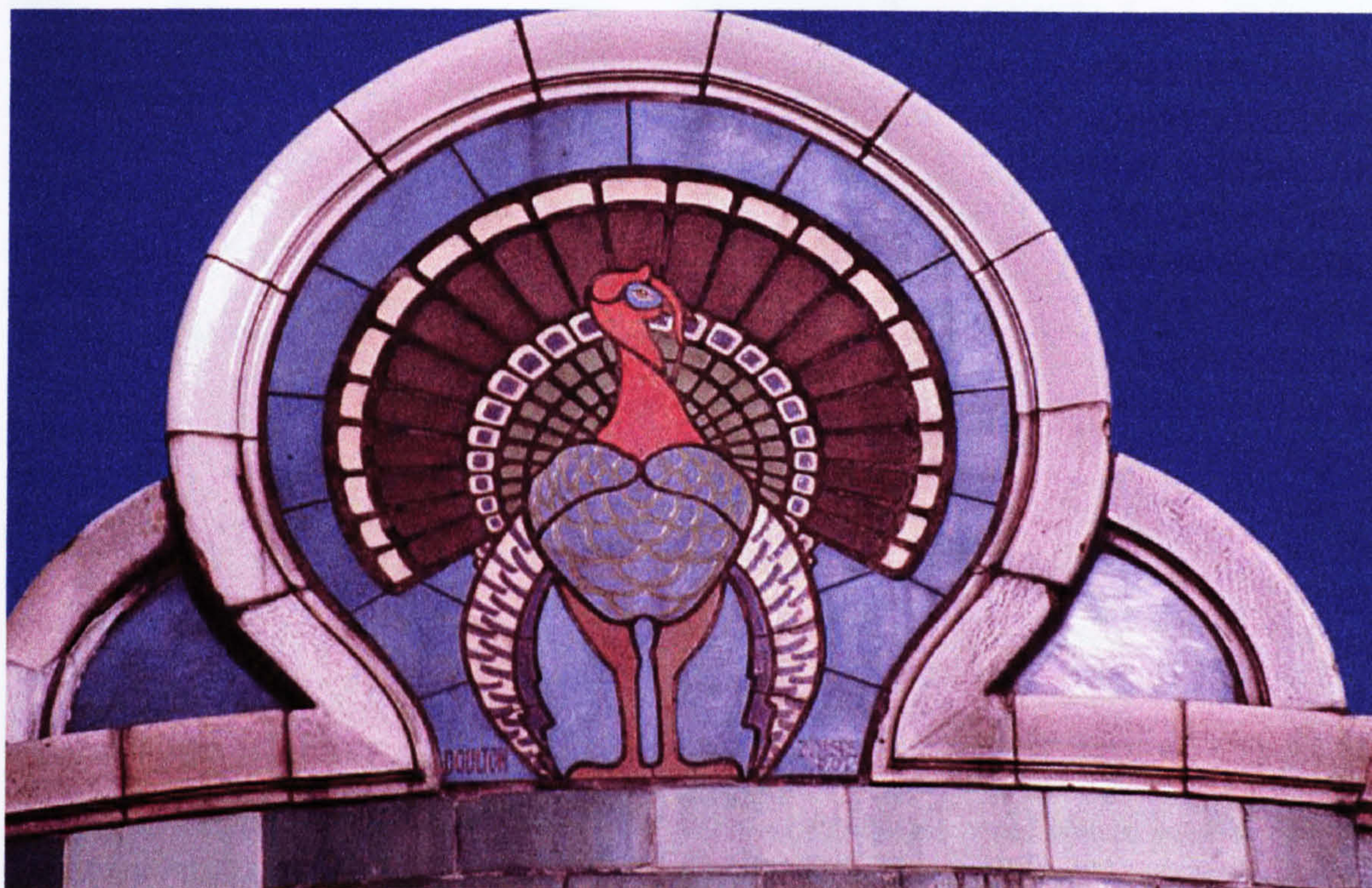


Plate 7.150. The Turkey Café pediment showing the inscriptions: 'Doulton' and 'Dimsie 1901'. The latter has yet to be satisfactorily explained !



Plate 7.151. Detail of Art Nouveau style decoration in polychrome Carraraware.



Plate 7.152. Column decoration in polychrome Carraraware.



Plate 7.153. Damaged Carraraware capital showing the hollow-block structure of the material and the concrete filling that helped to hold the blocks together and give strength to the facade of the Turkey Café.

local Leicester architect Arthur Wakerley (1862-1931), is certainly in Neatby's Oriental/Art Nouveau style but unfortunately there is no clear evidence other than stylistic attribution to connect him directly with the design of this structure. However, the building is included in this survey, albeit briefly, because the facade was planned while Neatby was in charge of Doulton's Architectural Ceramics Department, it is within his stylistic *oeuvre*, and finally, because it is one of the few structures where Doulton's plans for the disposition and attachment of the carraraware blocks survives. The overall configuration of the facade is very reminiscent of Neatby's Fox and Anchor public house, in London, even as regards the painted irregular shaped gable or pediment at the top of the building. The overall appearance and details of the facade and the Doulton plans are shown here as Plates 7.146-153. Plate 7.148 is of particular interest in that it may suggest a similar change in plans to that undertaken at Norwich where the adoption of carraraware happened rather late in the proceedings. In this illustration, taken from Doulton's main elevation plan for the building facade, a detail of the legend at the top of the plan clearly shows the words 'Terra Cotta' crossed out to be replaced by 'Carrara ware'. This may indicate a comparable change of materials by Wakerley, probably on advice from Neatby who favoured carraraware at this time, in an effort to create a more 'modern' building.

Wakerley's choice of Doulton as the supplier for architectural ceramics for the Turkey Café may well have been brought about through personal contact with Neatby, who was most certainly in Leicester in either 1899 or early 1900, working with the architect Walter Brand (d.1959), on a project for the new City Wholesale Market, Halford Street, Leicester. For this building there is irrefutable evidence of Neatby's direct involvement in the project, in the form

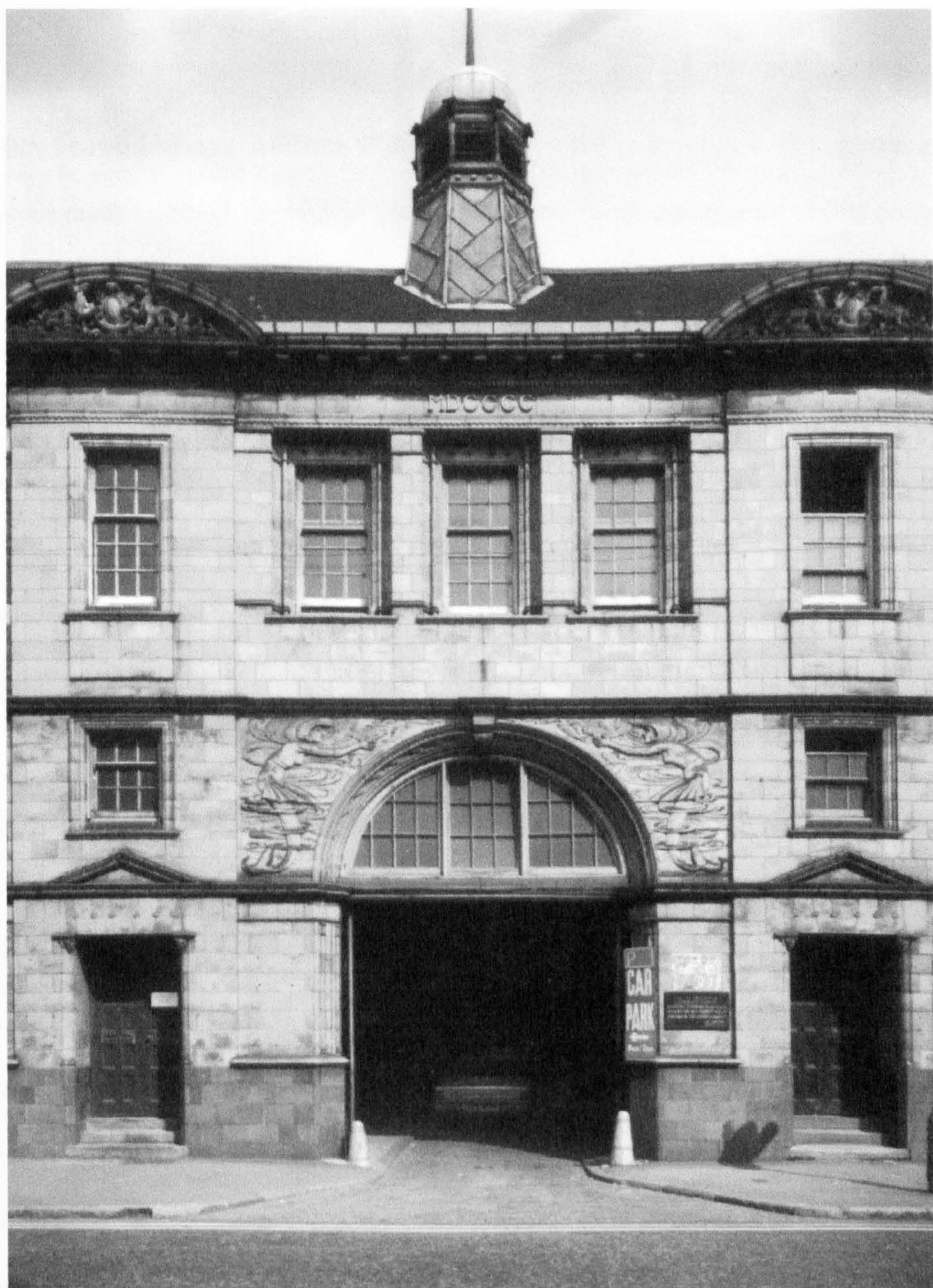


Plate 7.154. Wholesale Market, Halford Street, Leicester, main south entrance.
Photograph: courtesy of National Monuments Record, Crown copyright.

of a signed bas-relief terracotta sculpture.

The little known Leicester architect Walter Brand won the contract to build Leicester a new wholesale market through the typical Victorian method of allocating construction contracts, the architectural competition. In a letter dated 31st May 1899 from James Bell, Town Clerk, Town Hall, Leicester, to Walter Brand Esq., Architect, Bell informed the latter man of the Council's decision, the previous night, to award the first prize to him and also to recommend to the Markets Committee that he should be appointed as architect for the proposed market.⁹⁵ The Wholesale Market contract was an important commission both locally and presumably nationally as the news of the competition result, crediting Brand with success, was also published in the *Builder*.⁹⁶

Little is known about the construction of the Market and only two contemporary records remain to throw light on the evolution of the project. Both are from the business records of Walter Brand held at the Leicester Records Office and comprise a Corporation Sewerage Plan which shows the site of the proposed wholesale market in plan, and an architectural elevation drawn by Thomas Herbert titled: *Leicester Wholesale Market, Half Inch of South Front. Drawing No. 12*. This latter drawing shows some outline terracotta ornament but not in any detail and not as it was finally produced by Neatby at Doulton. Presumably, at least eleven other drawings existed for the site but these will have included a variety of drawings of plans

⁹⁵ Leicester Records Office, Misc. Record 137.

⁹⁶ *Builder*, LXXVI (1899), p. 543.



Plate 7.155. Spandrel decoration by Neatby, main south entrance, Wholesale Market, Leicester.
Photograph: courtesy of the National Monuments Record, Crown copyright.

and other elevations and need not have included further reference to terracotta ornament. In the absence of contrary evidence it seems likely that while having an overall idea of where he wanted decorative panels located, Brand probably left the fine detail of the decorative scheme to Neatby.

The main decorative elements on what was a rather lacklustre architectural composition were located on the main south entrance facade, as shown in Plate 7.154, and consisted of decorations to segmental pediments (now lost), perched rather awkwardly at the top of the building, and two bas-relief figures of mermaids filling the spandrels to either side of the main entrance arch, shown in detail in Plate 7.155. These latter figures were executed by Neatby and when the building was demolished in 1972, the panels were carefully removed and subsequently re-erected as part of a sculptural example of public art at West Bridge, Leicester, in the Spring of 1980.⁹⁷

From the point of view of this study of Neatby's work, the ornamental spandrels from the building are the most important feature of the whole architectural composition. Plate 7.156 illustrates the terracotta spandrels re-erected on the base of bridge pier of the old Great Central Railway, at West Bridge, one of the main entry points by road to the centre of Leicester. The design shows two confronting mermaids, illustrated here as Plates 7.157-158, finely modelled in bas-relief, their forward-leaning poses echoing the line of the archway beneath them.

⁹⁷ For the demolition see: *Leicester Chronicle*, 29th Dec. (1972), pp. 1 and 3; for the proposed relocation of the mermaids: *Leicester Mercury*, 13th April (1979), p. 19.

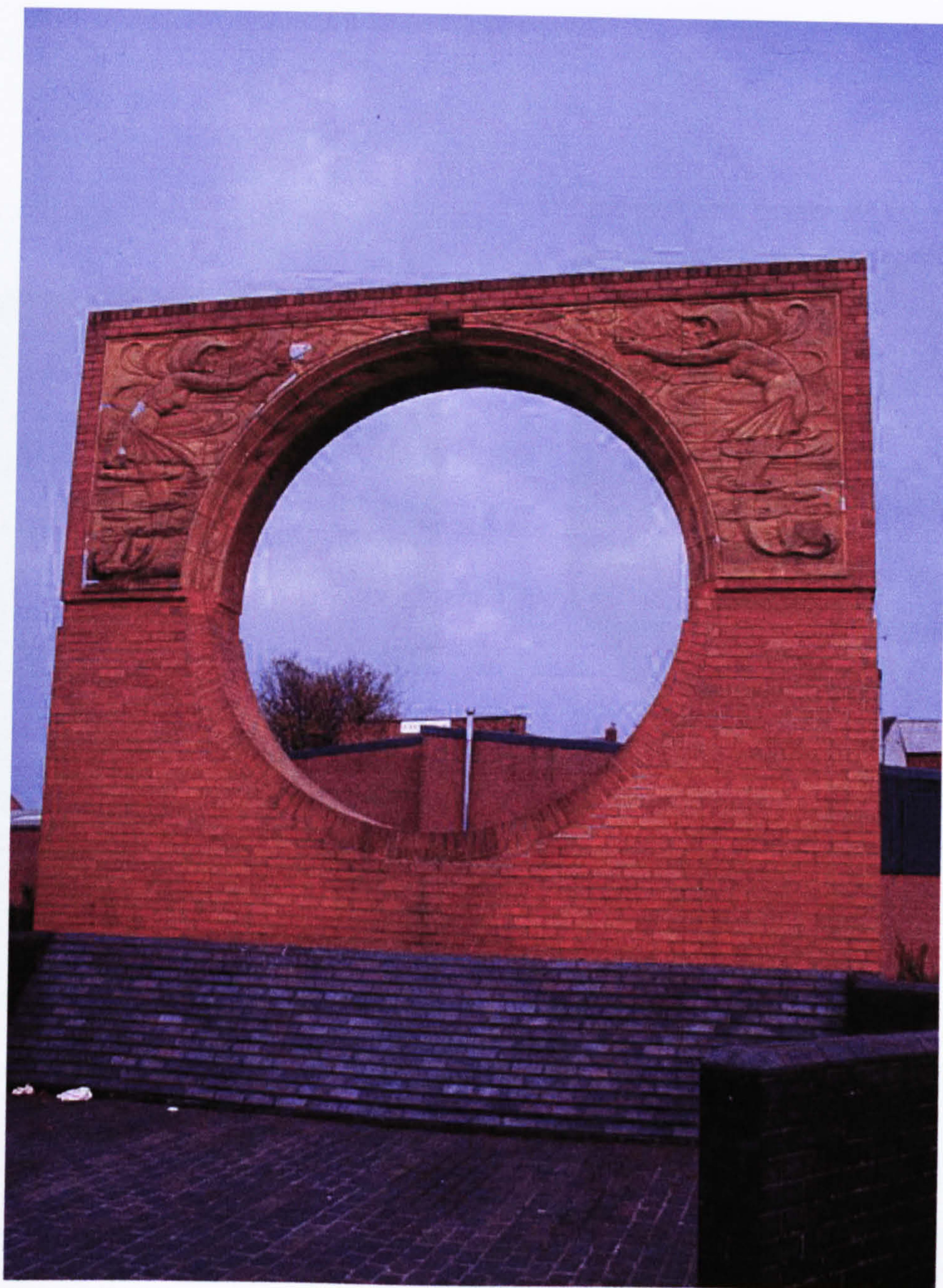


Plate 7.156. Wholesale Market spandrels re-erected at West Bridge, Leicester.



Plate 7.157. Leicester Wholesale Market, bas-relief terracotta sculpture of a mermaid by Neatby.



Plate 7.158. Leicester Wholesale Market, bas-relief terracotta sculpture of a mermaid by Neatby.

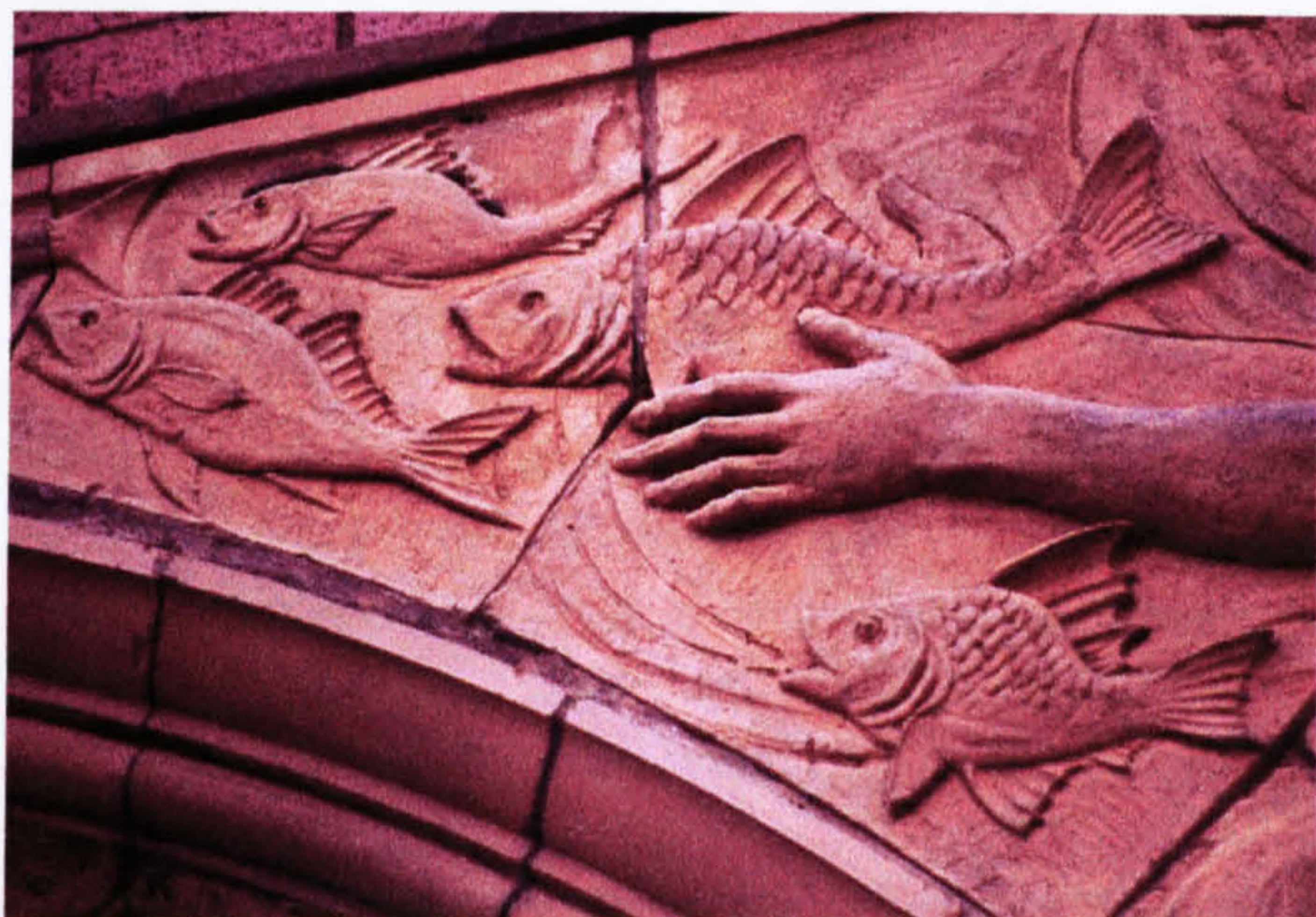


Plate 7.159. Detail of spandrel decoration.



Plate 7.160. Frieze of fish running around the inner perimeter of the spandrel decoration.



Plate 7.161. Lower section of right-hand spandrel showing Neatby's initials and the date '1900'.

Although more complex in composition and more finely detailed than Neatby's early mermaids for Plymouth, see above, like them, they share the 'fin skirt' and general appearance. In this composition Neatby has injected a sense of movement and immediacy as both figures reach out to touch fish that appear to slip through their fingers, Plate 7.159. About their bodies water swirls and this is reflected in the flowing movement of their long tresses of hair that compete with any female portrayal produced by Alphonse Mucha as icons of Art Nouveau. The delicacy of the modelling of these figures once more affirms Neatby's position as a master of terracotta sculpture. Below them a frieze of fish swims endlessly, Plate 7.160, while towards the very bottom of the right-hand panel, Plate 7.161, can be observed the hand-written inscription 'Doulton WJN April 11th 1900.'

The choice of subject matter for the Wholesale Market spandrels may seem a somewhat unusual one - few places in England can be as distant from the sea as Leicester - but presumably the produce sold in the market included fish and this inspired the composition. In fact, the mermaid and, even more so, the siren came to be very popular figures in art around the turn of the century. To Bram Dijkstra, writing on the subject of feminine evil as portrayed in art, 'These daughters of the sea seemed to be virtually everywhere'.⁹⁸ In painting they were usually portrayed as being aggressive and predatory, the typical requirements for the 19th-century male image of the *femme fatale*. In this guise Woman as a threatening sea creature was painted by numerous artists including John William Waterhouse (1849-1917), and Herbert James Draper

⁹⁸ Dijkstra, Bram : *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 258.

(1864-1920), in England, and Gustav Klimt (1862-1918), on the Continent. Many of the illustrations are of sirens whose beauty could lure men to their deaths, but mermaids even with their finned tails and fishy breath could be just as dangerous, as the upper parts of their bodies were supposed to possess the same perfection as those of the sirens. A painting that reflects this concept and that was also probably known to Neatby was Burne-Jones's *The Depths of the Sea* (1887), which depicts a mermaid dragging a drowned sailor to the bottom of the sea. Her face is beautiful yet full of menace while the sailor has suffered the brain death that many men saw as the fate of their fellows if they became seduced by an alluring woman.

Such concepts, although prevalent among the artists of the day and transmitted to the public through numerous works exhibited at the Royal Academy shows and elsewhere at the end of the Victorian period, say much about the insecurity of the male psyche in an age that saw a threat to the patriarchal Victorian establishment from the increasingly fervent demands for women's rights. However, such concepts seem far removed from an architectural exercise connected with the Wholesale Market in Leicester. Nevertheless, the symbolic content obvious in Neatby's designs for the Royal Arcade in Norwich reveal him to have been part of the artistic mainstream of his day and as part of that *milieu* he will have been well aware of the male backlash that accompanied the changing pattern of gender roles and may have been responding to the situation himself.

Again in 1900, yet far removed from both Leicester and gender issues was Neatby's design for Orchard House, Abbey Orchard Street, London W1. For this building, Plate 7.162, situated on



Plate 7.162. Orchard House, Abbey Orchard Street, London W1., terracotta decoration by Neatby (1900).



Plate 7.163. Orchard House bas-relief plaque by Neatby.



Plate 7.164. Orchard House, Peacock plaque by Neatby.

a corner plot, Neatby produced two buff-coloured terracotta panels, modelled uncharacteristically in low relief in a decidedly English New Art style, and several female heads which act as consoles, supporting an entablature at first-floor level. The two panels, shown in Plates 7.163-7.164, are set above the doorways of the building. One spells out the name of the building in ornamental lettering and the other depicts two confronting peacocks. Both were featured in Aymer Vallance's article on Neatby in the *Studio*, where the author criticised the lettering of the name 'Orchard House', but was at pains to point out that the eccentric outline of the pediment on which the lettering was placed was not Neatby's responsibility.⁹⁹

The decorative scheme for the panels was presumably suggested by the name of the property as both main ornamental panels feature trees. The underlying theme of the decoration is undoubtedly everlasting life and the regenerative cycle of Nature. This is particularly evident in the juxtaposition of the tree of life motif with the two peacocks, on the secondary panel, whose supposedly incorruptible carcasses symbolize everlasting life. The main panel, bearing the name of the building, features three trees, all of which appear to be fruit bearing, presumably apples, signifying fecundity and rebirth.

The formal structure of the trees on the two panels varies considerably. On the peacock panel the trunk of the tree issues forth from the lower border of the panel without discernable roots and grows straight upwards to terminate in a small discreet circular canopy of leaves. Its symmetrically placed side branches are curvilinear in form and give forth further side branches

⁹⁹ Vallance, Aymer : 'Mr W.J. Neatby and His Work', *Studio*, xxix (1903), pp. 114-116.



Plate 7.165. Charles Harrison Townsend's Whitechapel Art Gallery (1899-1901). The 'Tree of Life' motif appears on both towers.

of similar form that end in small groups of leaves. The construction of the branch system is somewhat reminiscent of Neatby's painted trees on the proscenium arch at Gosforth. The three trees on the other panel each display free spreading root structures beneath similarly straight trunks that once again terminate in leaf canopies. However, these latter trees are much more geometric in conception with the centre tree having side branches that leave the main trunk at right-angles and the side trees displaying almost triangular canopies. Both formal arrangements are suggestive of graphic work produced by the Glasgow Four, particularly for poster production. The individual leaf shapes, however, have perhaps more in common with the work of Charles Harrison Townsend particularly as displayed on the facade of his Whitechapel Art Gallery (1899-1901), shown here as Plate 7.168. On this contemporary building the facade is graced by square canopied trees, indicating yet another arrangement for the formal stylization of tree structures, and, in doing so, illustrating that the practice of incorporating ornamental trees and other plant forms into the confines of architecturally determined decorative spaces was common among *avant-garde* architects and designers at this time.

Although the more noticeable decorative elements of the Neatby scheme for Orchard House are very much in the English New Art style, the structure has certain references to Classical architectural models, possessing an entablature graced with a rather weak cornice displaying widely spaced dentils, as can be seen on Plate 7.162. In keeping with this architectural tradition a number of consoles in the form of female heads support the entablature. Three of these heads are shown as Plates 7.166-7.168. The attractive youthful female heads convey a mixture of Classical and Art Nouveau characteristics but are typical of Neatby's sculptural work. These



Plate 7.166. Orchard House, female terracotta head by Neatby.

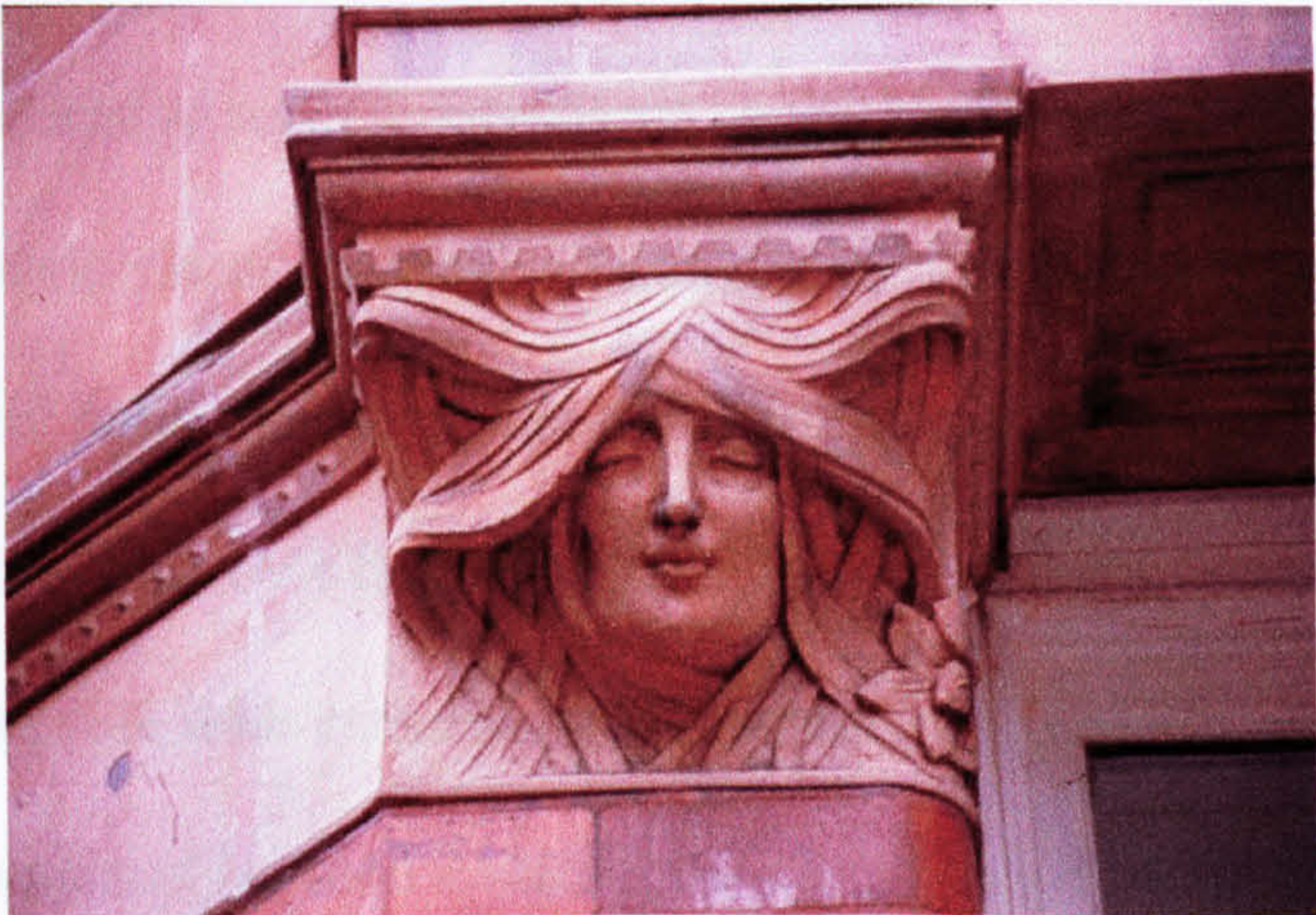


Plate 7.167. Orchard House, female terracotta head by Neatby.



Plate 7.168. Orchard House, female terracotta head, swathed in foliage, by Neatby.

heads also possess a certain symbolic content. Of the first two shown, Plate 7.166 shows a woman with her eyes open while Plate 7.167 has the woman with her eyes closed. Presumably they represent day and night or possibly good and evil. The final plate shows a female head swathed in foliage, again making a reference to Nature. This latter sculpture is reminiscent of the *Green Man* head that Neatby produced for the Manchester Municipal School of Art.

The last recorded major project that Neatby appears to have undertaken before leaving Douulton is the facade of the Everard Building, Broad Street, Bristol (1901), shown here as Plate 7.169. For this project Neatby resorted to a decorative scheme employing an interesting mixture of Ruskinian didacticism, English New Art style visual imagery and modern ceramic technology. The facade has been described in several publications, particularly by Barnard, but also by Everard himself, and has been seen as one of Neatby's finest works. While this is undoubtedly true, although the artwork and technical skill with ceramic materials remains Neatby's, the concept for the design owes much to the vision of Edward Everard, the owner of the property.

The proprietor of a commercially successful printing firm, Everard nevertheless had time for more idealistic pursuits and was much 'influenced by the example of those who, like William Morris and Emery Walker, sought to elevate the printer's art to its former high standards'.¹⁰⁰ He appears to have seen himself as the inheritor of a lengthy tradition of quality printing stretching back to Gutenberg and forward to Morris and his Kelmscott Press. In 1900, having

¹⁰⁰ Harvey, Charles and Press, Jon : 'A Bristol Printing House: Edward Everard's Monument to Gutenberg, Morris and the Printer's Art', *Journal of the William Morris Society*, x, number 4 (Spring 1994), p. 40.



Plate 7.169. Main facade of the Edward Everard Printing Works, Bristol, by Neatby.

‘outgrown his existing premises, he determined to build a state-of-the-art printing works in the city centre, which would be a monument to the history of printing’¹⁰¹ and therefore analogous with his high-minded ideas on the nature of the printer’s art. He employed a Bristol architect, Henry Williams, to design the building but from the start seems to have dictated the style of architecture for the facade, and, to an extent, its ornament. As he explains in his own book devoted to the printing works, he was anxious promote a feel for the 15th century in the work, eschewing the values of the High Renaissance, but looking not just to Gothic principles but also to the Celtic and Byzantine periods for inspiration.¹⁰² The front of the resulting structure ended up as an unusual configuration of three superimposed arcades, with the third, and uppermost, being recessed behind a castellated parapet, the whole being topped by a high pointed gable bounded to either side by a small octagonal turret, each roofed with a dome and finial.

The decorative scheme for the building was originally conceived in a very different manner to its present form, as Everard explained:

‘The first intention was to keep the decorations under uncompromising Celtic treatment, in light biscuit colour with ward buff shadings, and with all the ramifications of Celtic ingenuities and grotesque animals for friezes and traceries; but in communicating the general scheme to Messrs Doulton & Co., of Lambeth, the remark

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Everard, E. : *A Bristol Printing House Spoken of in Several Fragments* (Bristol : Everard, 1902), p. 9.

was hazarded as to whether it would be possible to illuminate the façade with cartoons in rich Oriental colours. That firm took the subject up with infinite interest and spared neither time nor pains in producing the cartoons and embellishments.....'.¹⁰³

In this way Bristol acquired a unique building. Everard continues his description of the events by saying that Doulton's principal artist, Neatby, took up the challenge to produce 'an illuminated color scheme in outdoor ceramics which claims originality'. The biscuit colour was replaced by the ivory tones of Carraraware and the adoption of a graphic style of decoration, which replaced the Celtic grotesques, allowed for the inclusion of two of Everard's heroes, Gutenberg and Morris to be included in the design, presumably at his suggestion. For Neatby, the scheme allowed him to include symbolic content in the shape of the figure that fills the gable, which illustrates the literary attributes of light and truth in the form of a lamp and a mirror, and the Spirit of Literature that dominates the centre of the facade between the figures of Gutenberg and Morris.

Plate 7.170 shows the spandrel decoration at first floor level, with Plates 7.171-7.173 showing details of each element. Plate 7.174 shows the figure in the gable. All the figures are drawn in a strong heavily delineated graphic style similar to poster art. For once, the meaning of the images was obvious and Everard's message was clear.

To consider other points, the facade also contained components that had become part of Neatby's standard repertoire. Plate 7.175 shows the top of one of the small turrets, decorated

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*



Plate 7.170. Everard Building, central section of facade.



Plate 7.171. Everard Building, Spirit of Literature.



Plate 7.172. Everard Building, image of Gutenberg by Neatby.



Plate 7.173. Everard Building, image of Morris by Neatby.

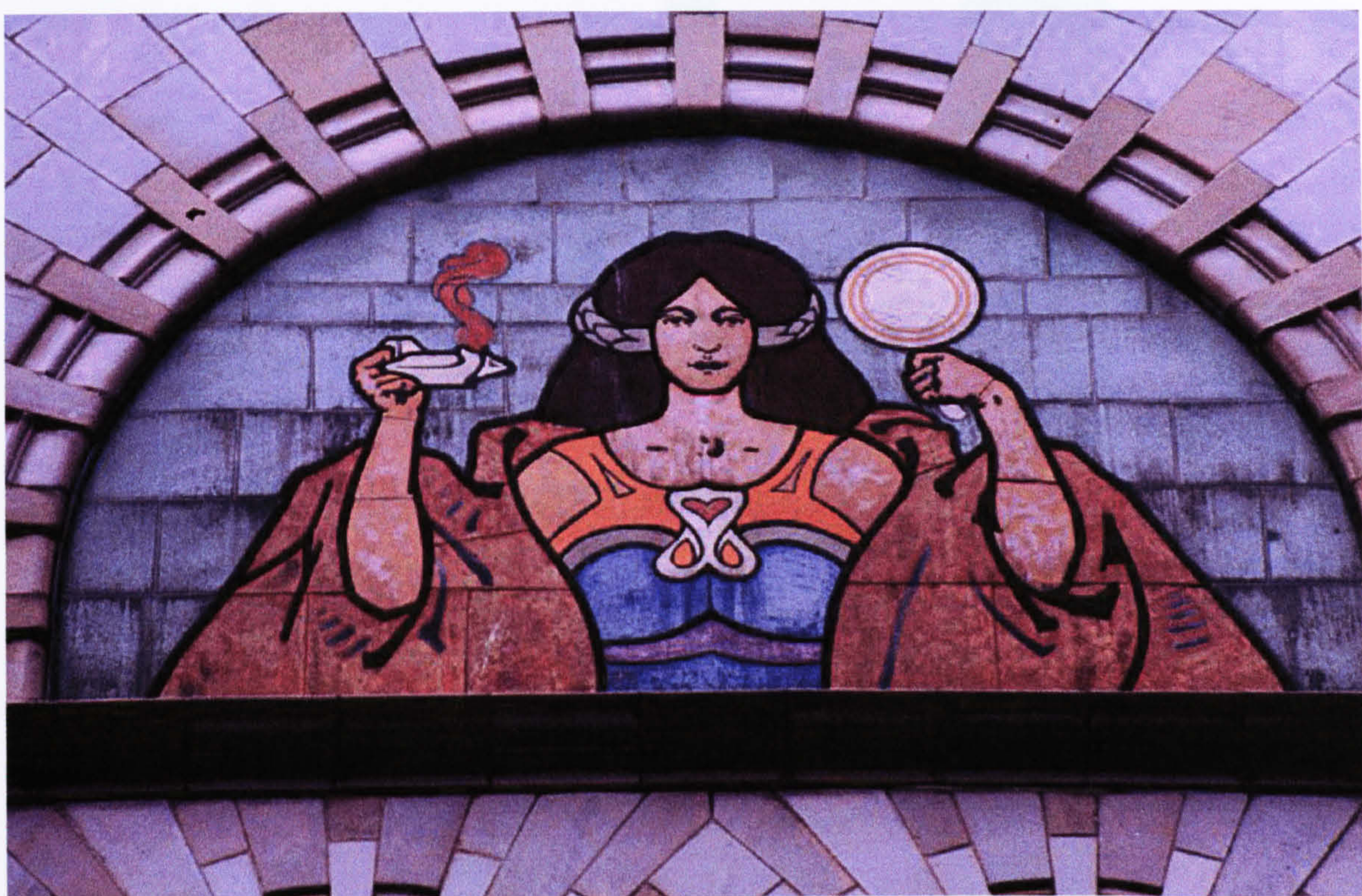


Plate 7.174. Everard Building, figure symbolizing 'Light and Truth' at the top of the facade.



Plate 7.175. One of the two ornamental pavilions at the top of the building.



Plate 7.176. Everard Building, frieze of stylized trees.



Plate 7.177. Everard Building, abstract tree and root design.

in a manner that could so easily have been found at the Norwich Arcade. Plate 7.176 illustrates a frieze of trees, so much a part of Neatby's visual vocabulary and finally, Plate 7.177, shows a tangled, almost abstract maze of tortuous roots, perhaps a reference to Everard's beloved Celtic art.

With this polychromatic ceramic mural Neatby created something both original and extraordinary, so much so, that when the building was unveiled it was necessary to have the police to regulate the traffic past the site for two days as so many members of the public stopped to stare at the new contribution to Bristol's architectural landscape.¹⁰⁴ With this project more than any other, Neatby had achieved a work of public art.

¹⁰⁴ Carr, J. Miller : 'Architectural Ceramics', *British Clayworker*, 14 (1906), p. xc.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE INDEPENDENT DESIGNER : 1900-1910

Neatby, Evans and Co.

Neatby left his employment at Doulton and Co. and early in 1901 set up as an independent businessman in partnership with another designer E. Hollyer Evans. The year of his career change can be ascertained with some certainty as the new company, Neatby, Evans and Co., decided to release what seems to have been their first promotional brochure with the rather appositely chosen title: *The 1901 Book*. This small format catalogue, some 163mm. x 120mm., was, in its own words, meant 'to suggest the character of the work done' by the new firm, and was largely a collection of drawings to illustrate the type of goods produced by the partnership. In keeping with the designer/craftsman approach taken by the company, the catalogue had an Arts and Crafts inspired appearance, being printed on a thick cream paper with irregular edges to each page. The drawings, all of which were by Neatby, were executed in a simple graphic style, rather like Japanese wood block prints, giving the booklet a rather hand-made, if not amateur, complexion. Certainly, there was no pretense to make the work seem sophisticated. As can be seen in Plates 8.1-8.16, which illustrate the entire contents of the booklet, their range included furniture, metalwork, graphic designs and stained glass as shown in the top panels of a range of doors from their own studio. The illustration, Plate 8.6, showing a fragment from a large mural painting by Neatby is interesting as the work is otherwise unknown.

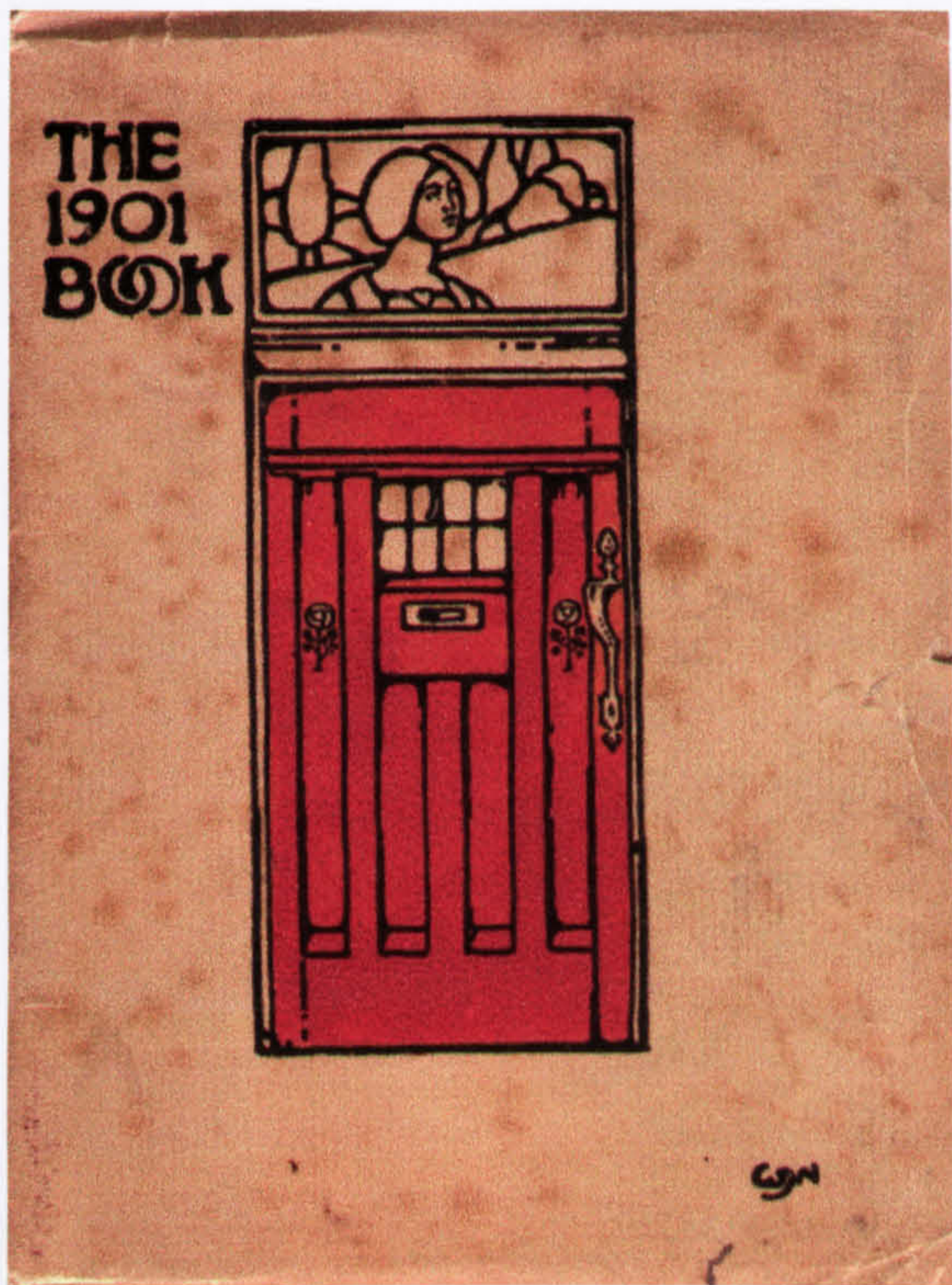


Plate 8.1. Cover of *The 1901 Book*, designed by Neatby.



Plate 8.2. Graphic design from *The 1901 Book*.

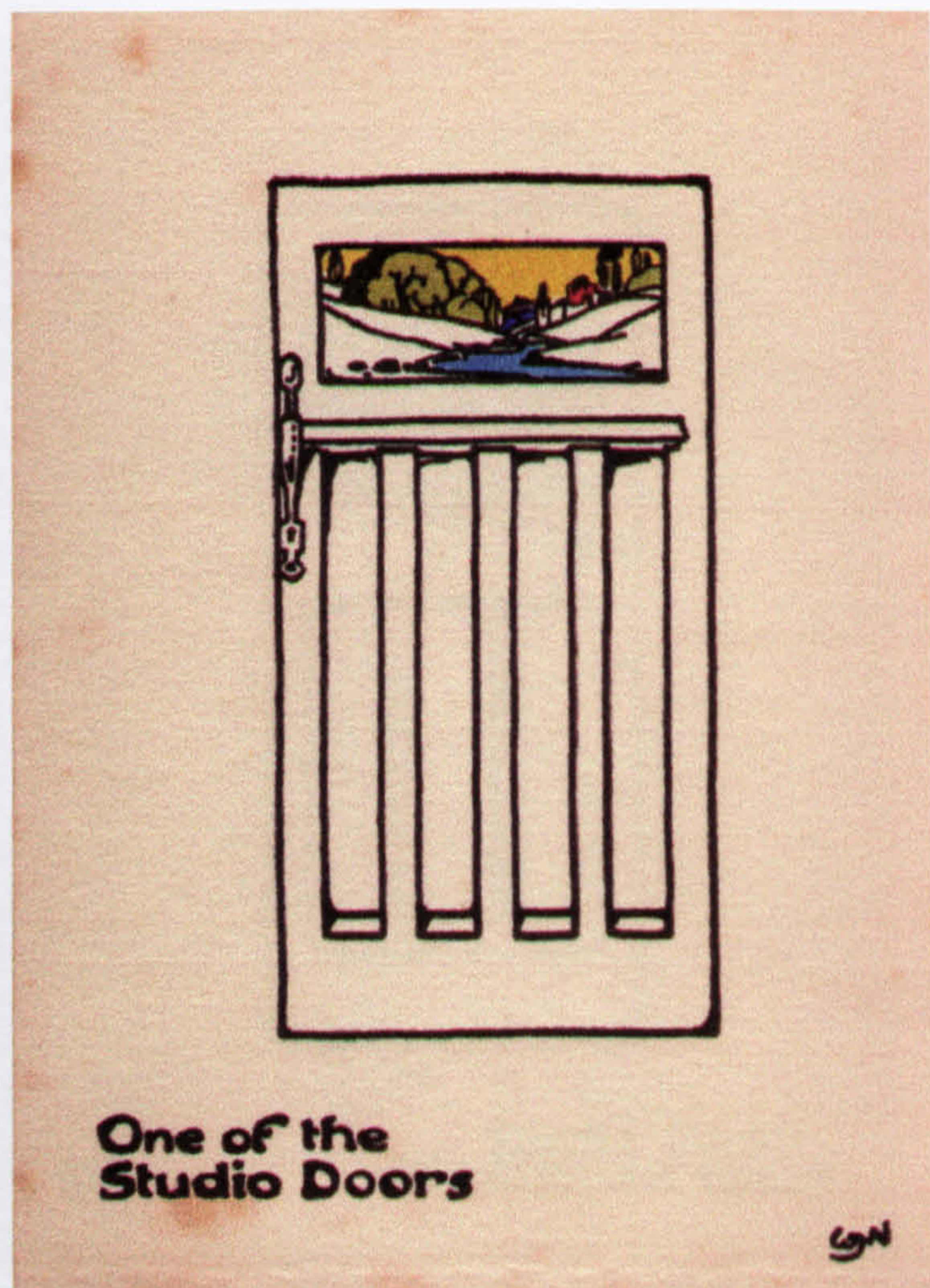


Plate 8.3. Design for a studio door from *The 1901 Book*.

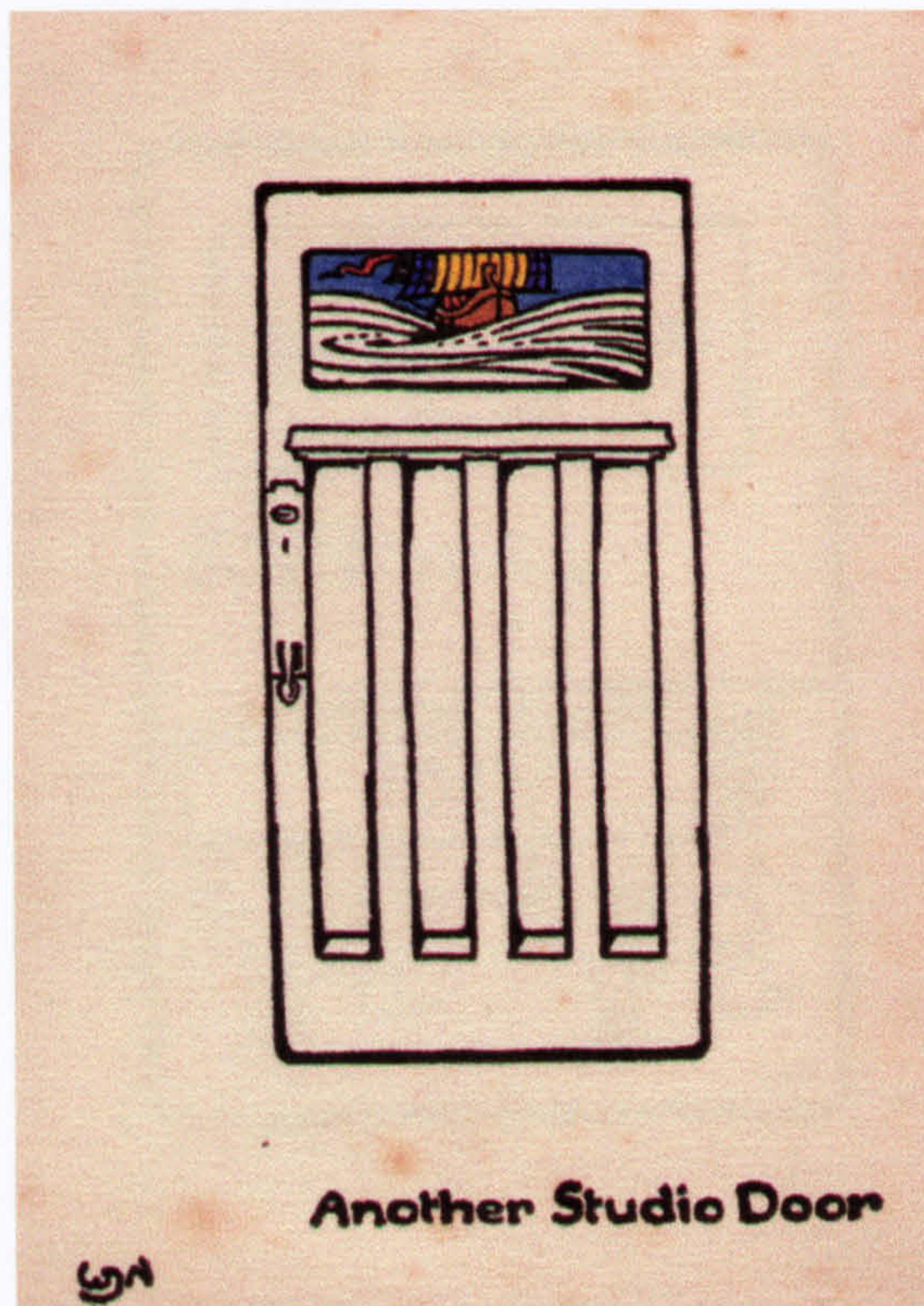
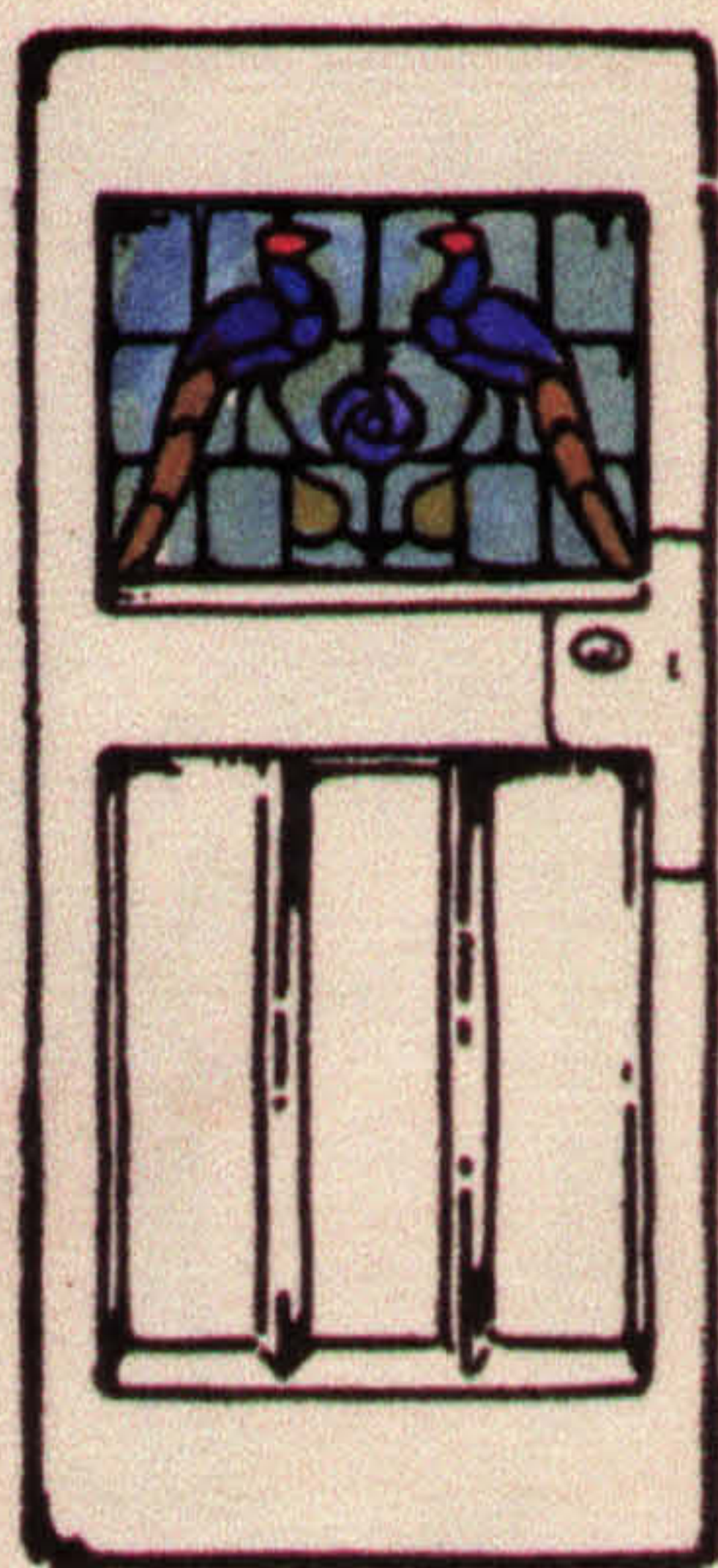


Plate 8.4. Design for a studio door from *The 1901 Book*.



Plate 8.6. Drawing of a section of an untraced mural painting by Neatby from *The 1901 Book*.



Studio Door
with Stained Glass

Plate 8.5. A studio door with stained glass panel from *The 1901 Book*.

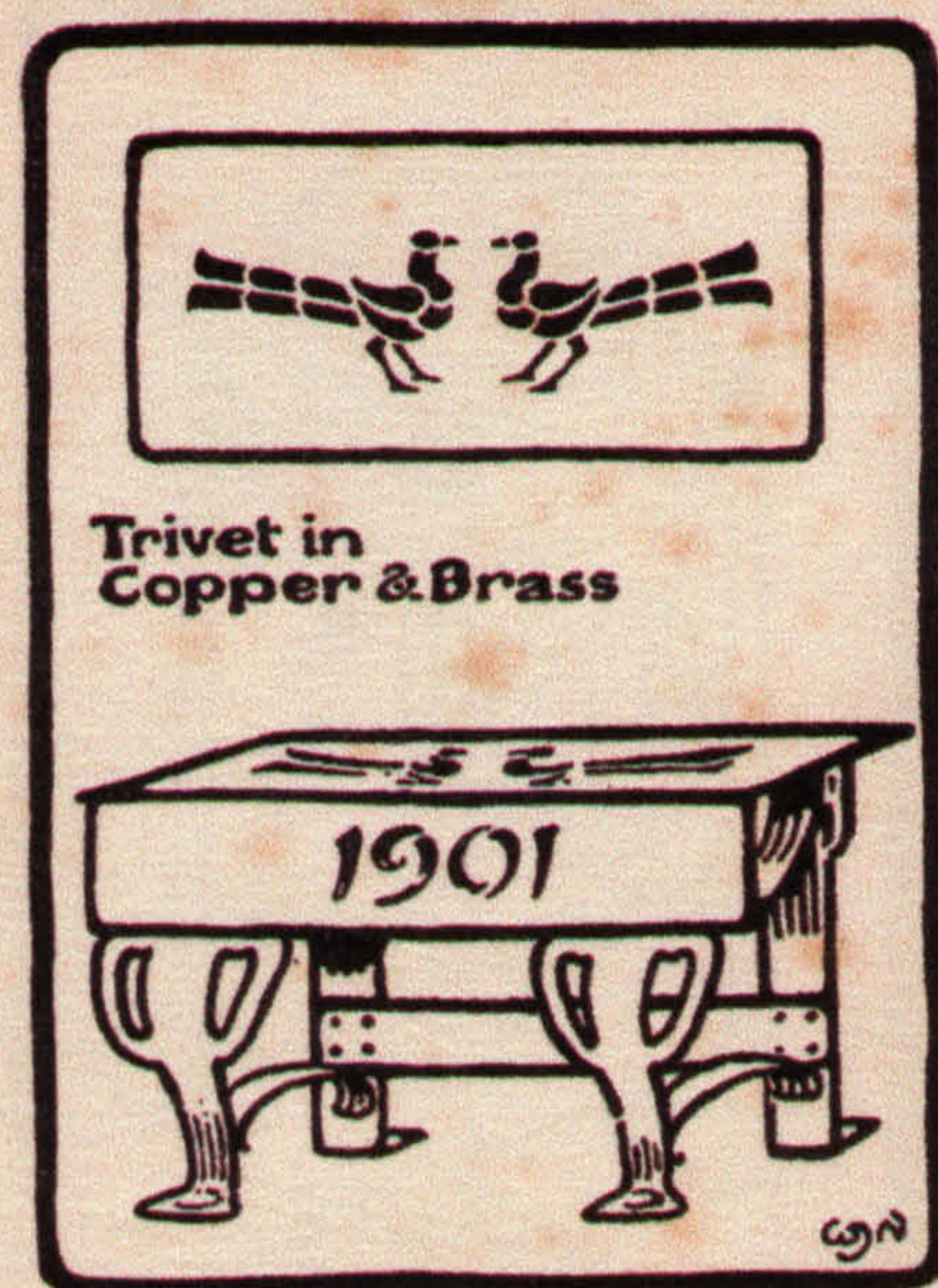


Plate 8.7. Metalwork from *The 1901 Book*.

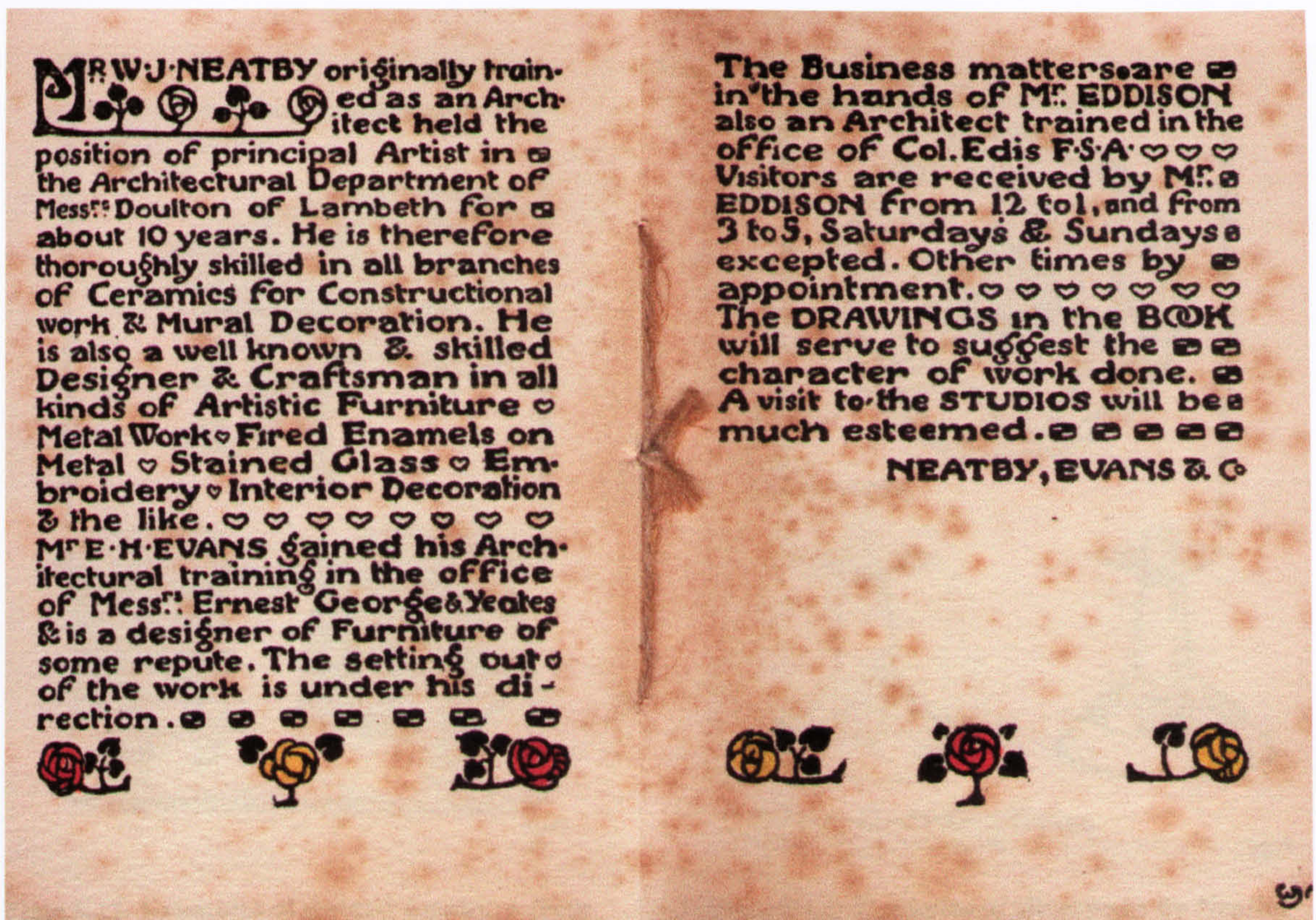


Plate 8.8. Central pages from *The 1901 Book* displaying information about Neatby, Evans and Co., and its products.



Plate 8.9. Graphic design, possibly for use on furniture, from *The 1901 Book*.

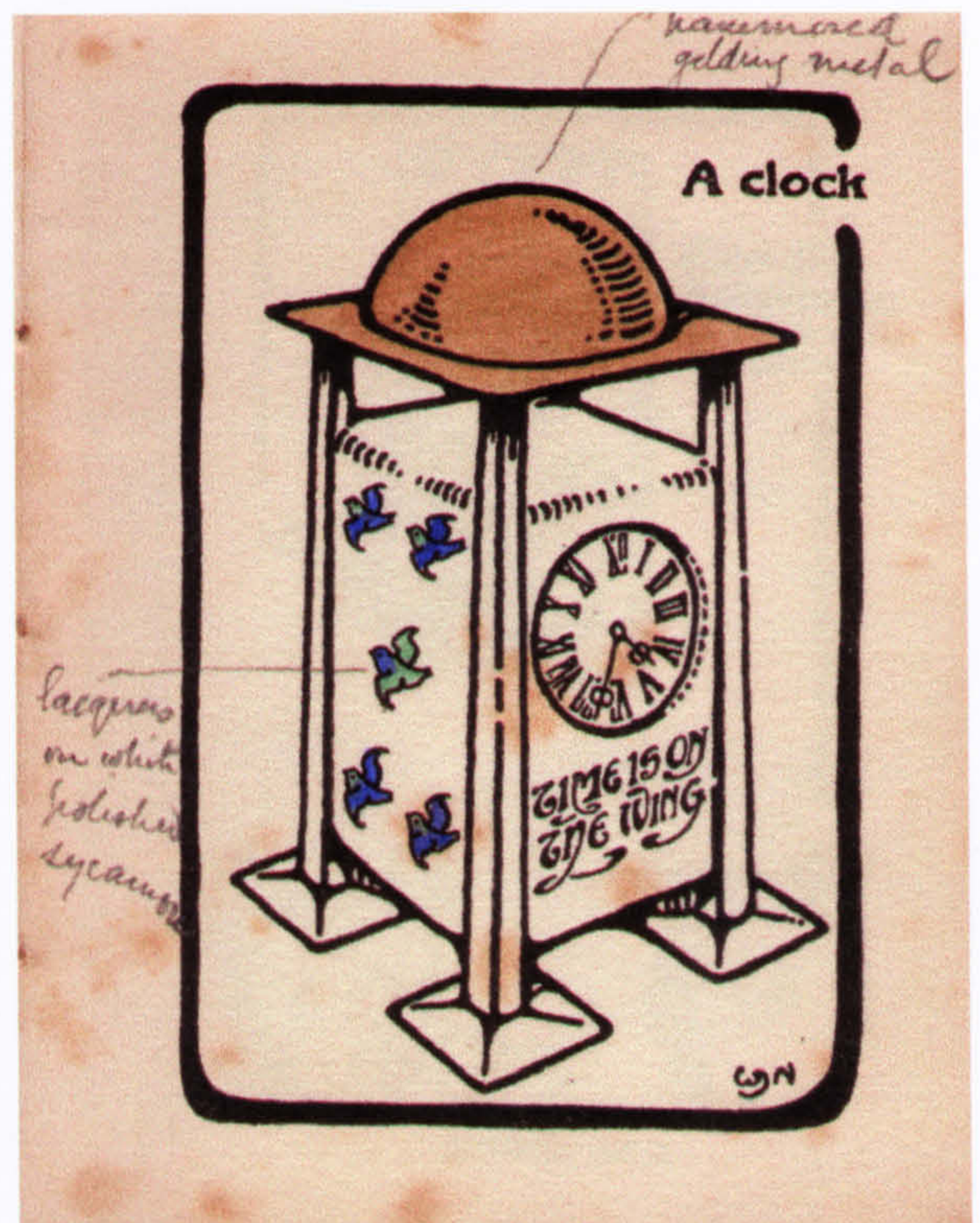


Plate 8.10. Wood and metal clock case with painted lacquer ornament from *The 1901 Book*.

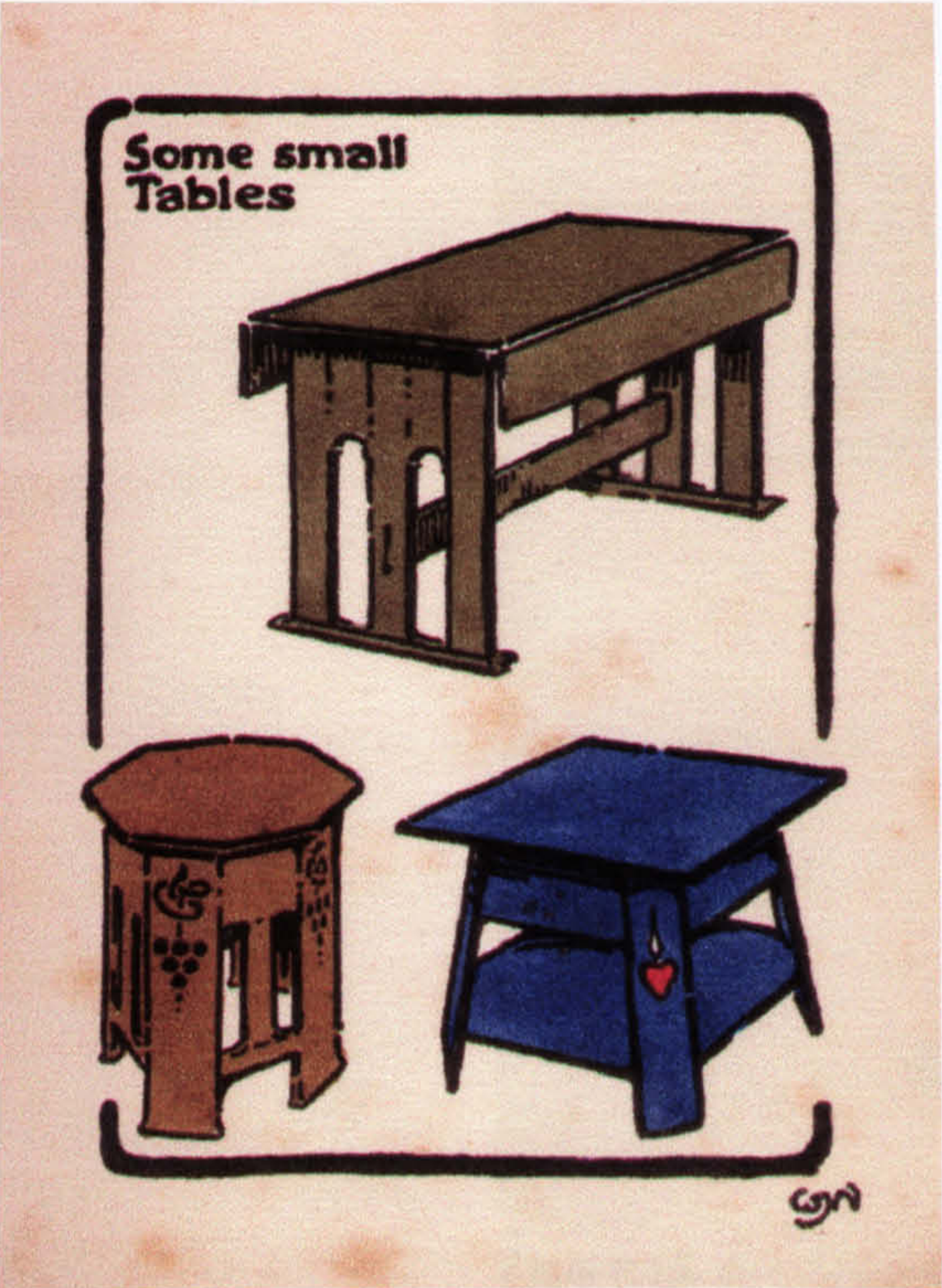


Plate 8.11. Examples of stained furniture from *The 1901 Book*.

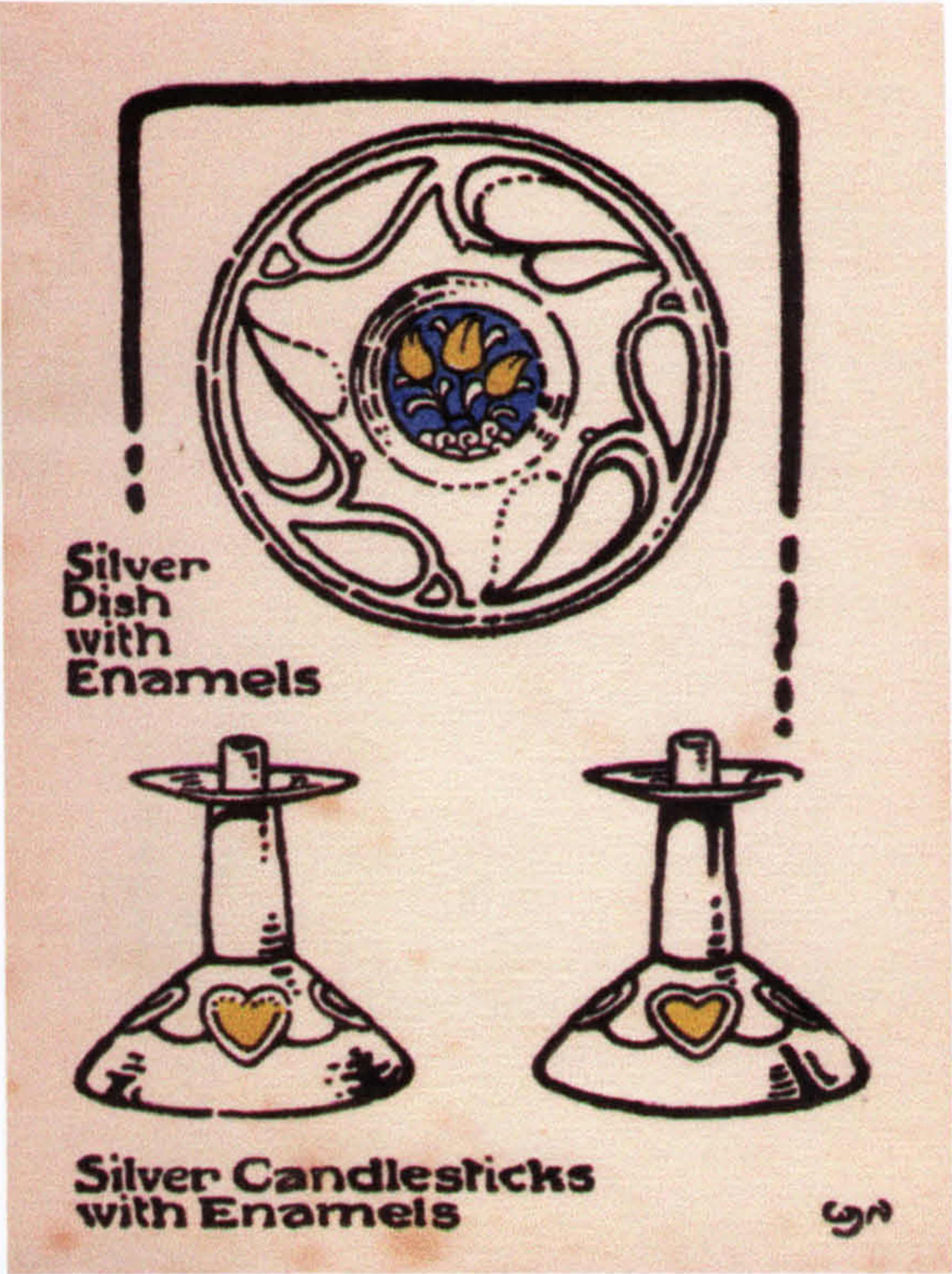


Plate 8.12. Examples of silverware by Neatby from *The 1901 Book*.

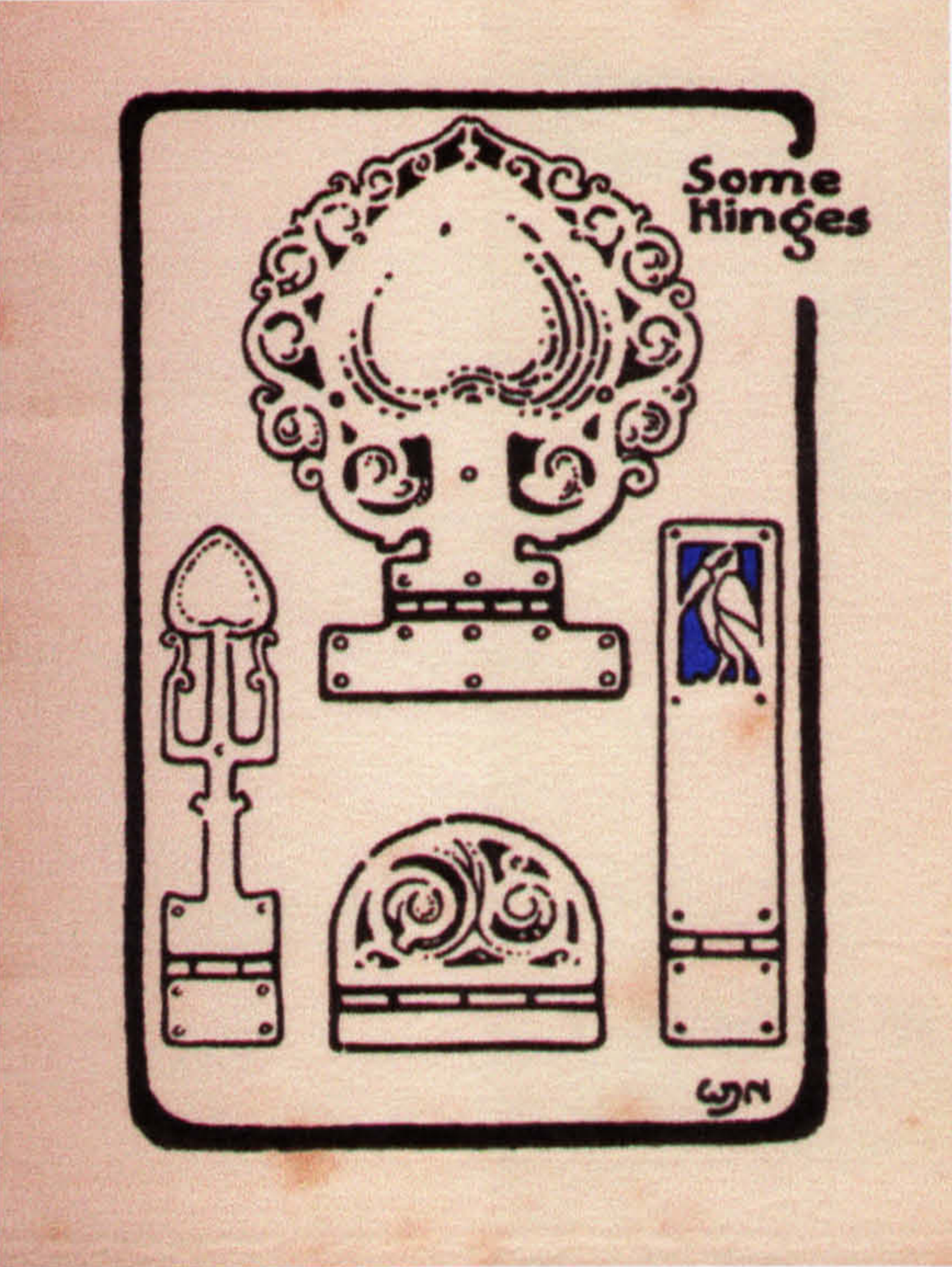


Plate 8.13. Metal furniture hinges from *The 1901 Book*.

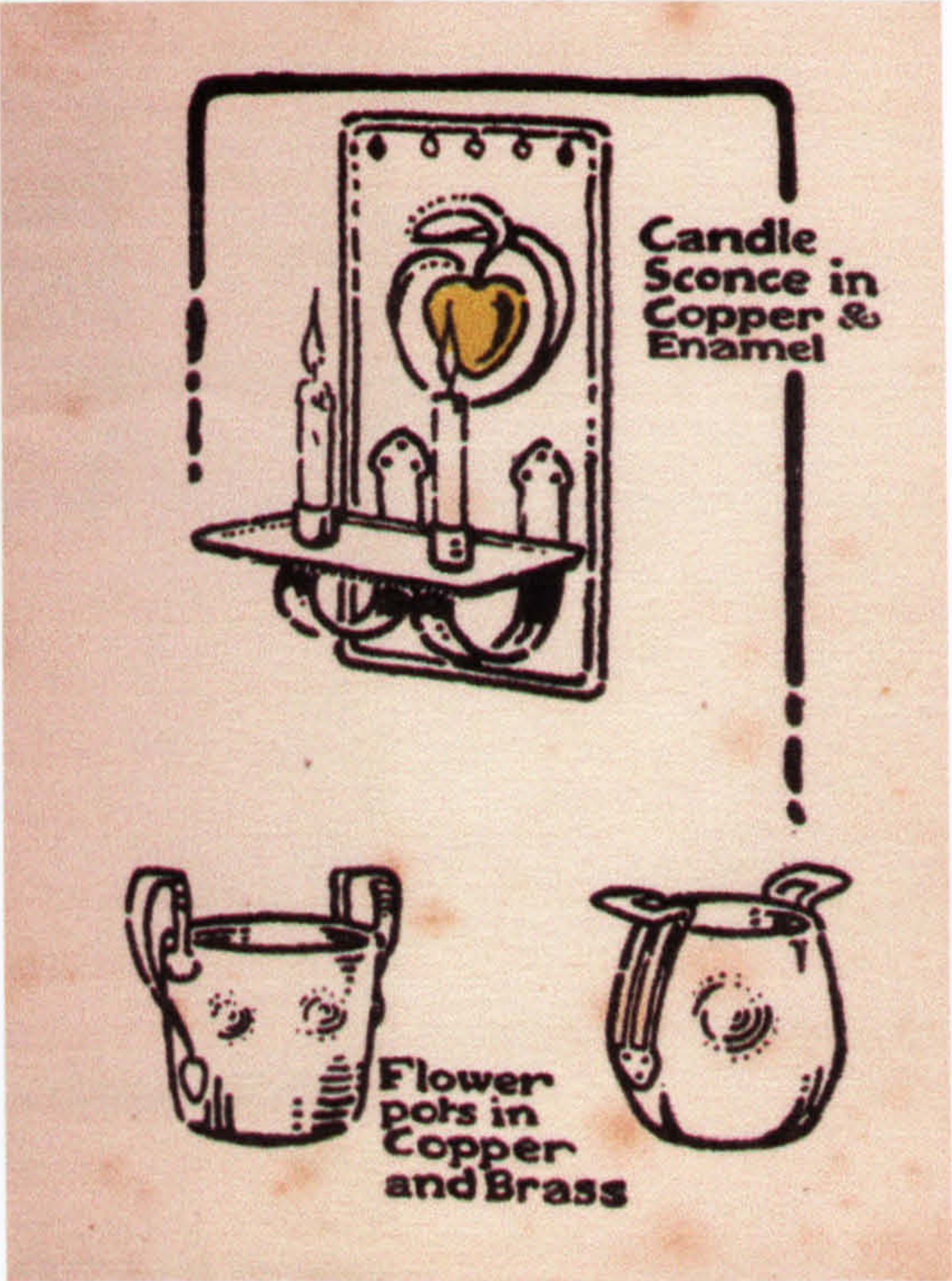


Plate 8.14. Brass and copper wares in *The 1901 Book*.

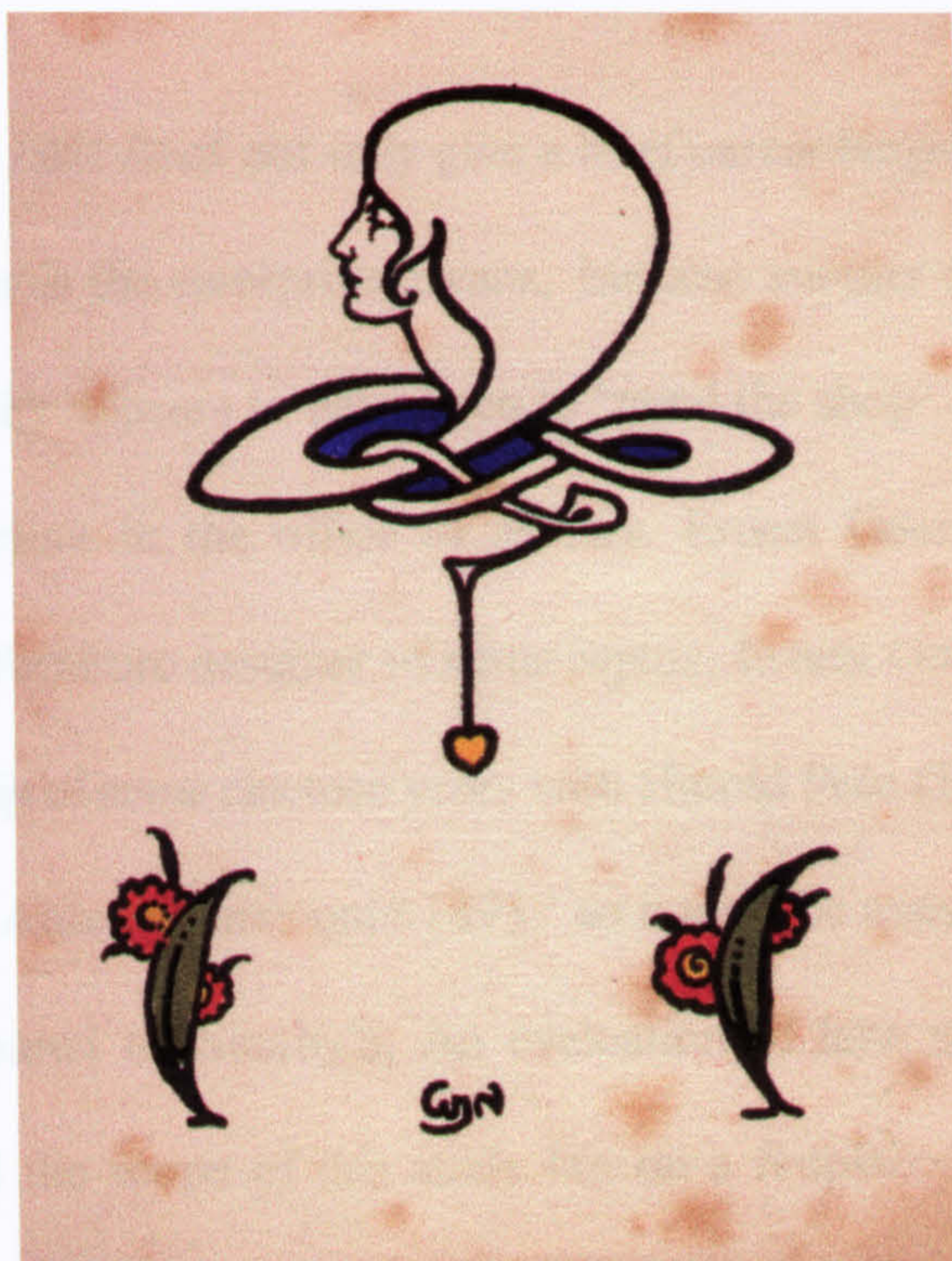


Plate 8.15. Art Nouveau graphic design by Neatby from *The 1901 Book*.



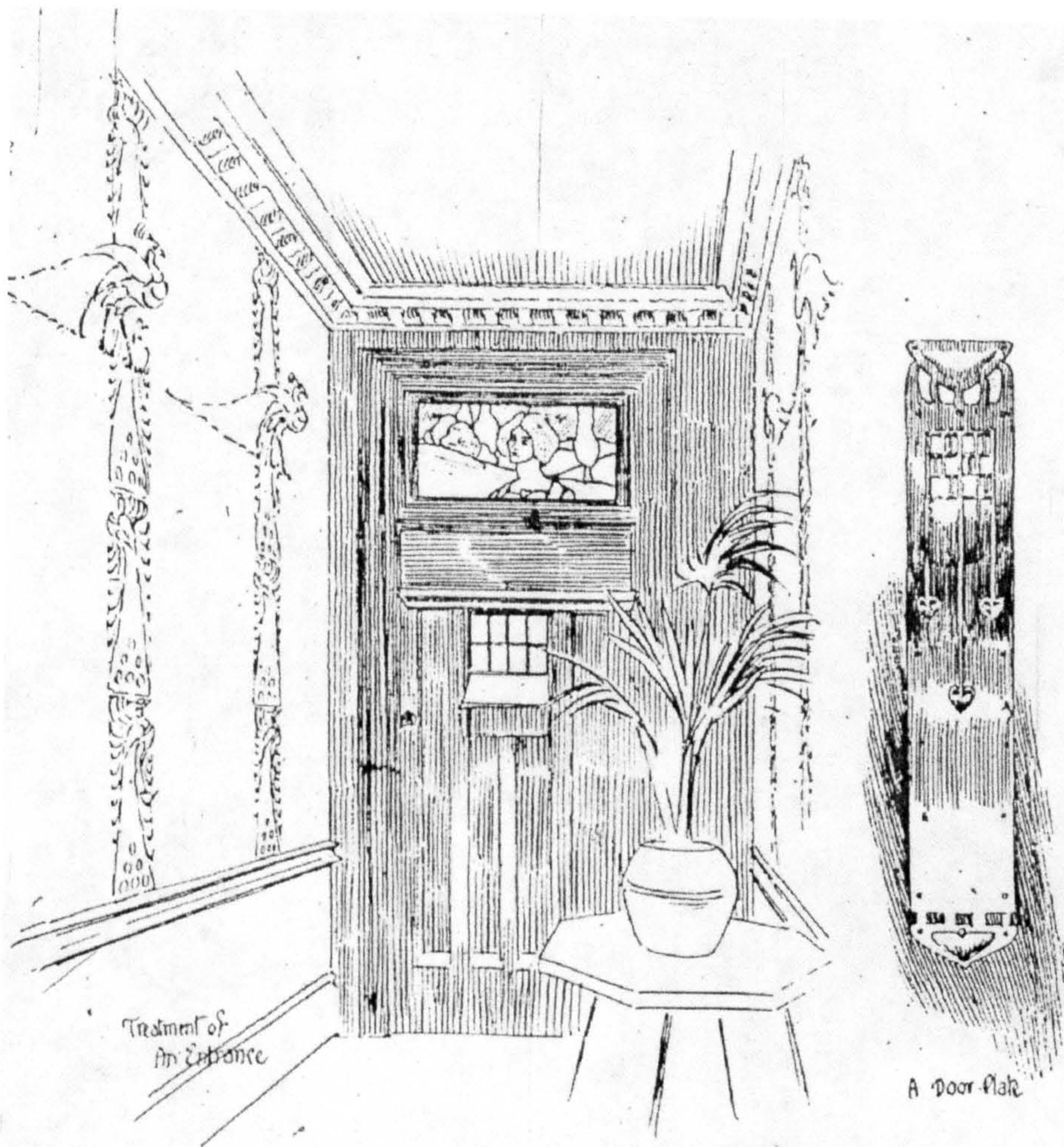
Plate 8.16. Back cover of *The 1901 Book* showing the company mark and address.

The centre pages of *The 1901 Book* not only give a brief career biography for Neatby but also mention his main partner in the enterprise, Evans, but also another colleague, a Mr Eddison, whose main responsibility appears to have been to ‘mind the shop’. Evans, the booklet says, had trained in architecture in the office of Messrs. Ernest George and Yeates and had subsequently become a furniture designer of some repute. Ernest George (1839-1922), better known for his partnership of some nineteen years with Harold Peto (1854-1933), did not enter into a partnership with Alfred Yeates until 1893,¹ so it must be assumed that his training was relatively recent compared to Neatby’s. An evaluation of how seriously Evans practised architecture is beyond the scope of this study but on a fireplace that he designed c.1907, published in the *Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art*, he retained the title ‘Architect’ after his name.² Possibly, like Neatby, he was more interested in decoration than structural design. The third person in the venture, Eddison, said to be an architect, trained in the office of Colonel Robert William Edis (1839-1927). However, Eddison’s name does not appear in the company description: ‘Neatby, Evans and Co.’, and it seems probable that he was a junior member of the firm. Ernest George and Robert Edis were both enthusiastic advocates of the use of architectural ceramics and it may be through working with them that Neatby met his two future colleagues.

The firm set up premises in January 1901, at 15, Percy Street, London, W1., just off Tottenham Court Road and near to the British Museum, amidst a certain amount of publicity from the

¹ Gray, A. Stuart : *Edwardian Architecture* (London : Wordsworth, 1985), p. 186.

² *The Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art* (London : Studio Publication, 1907), facing p. 106.



711 WJ Neatby Evans & Co's
15 Percy St.
No 1.

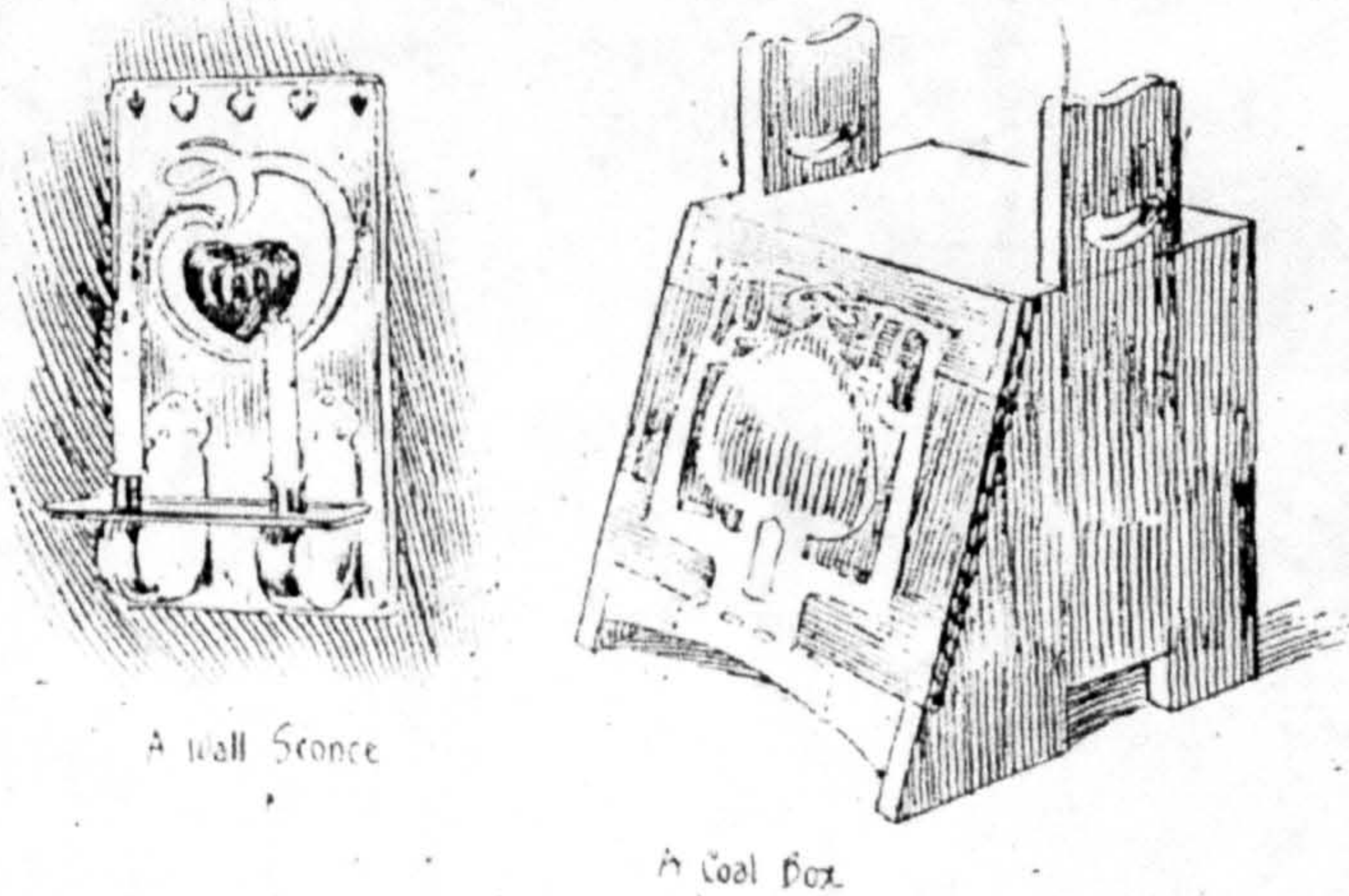


Plate 8.17. Products by Neatby and Evans published in the *British Architect* (1901).

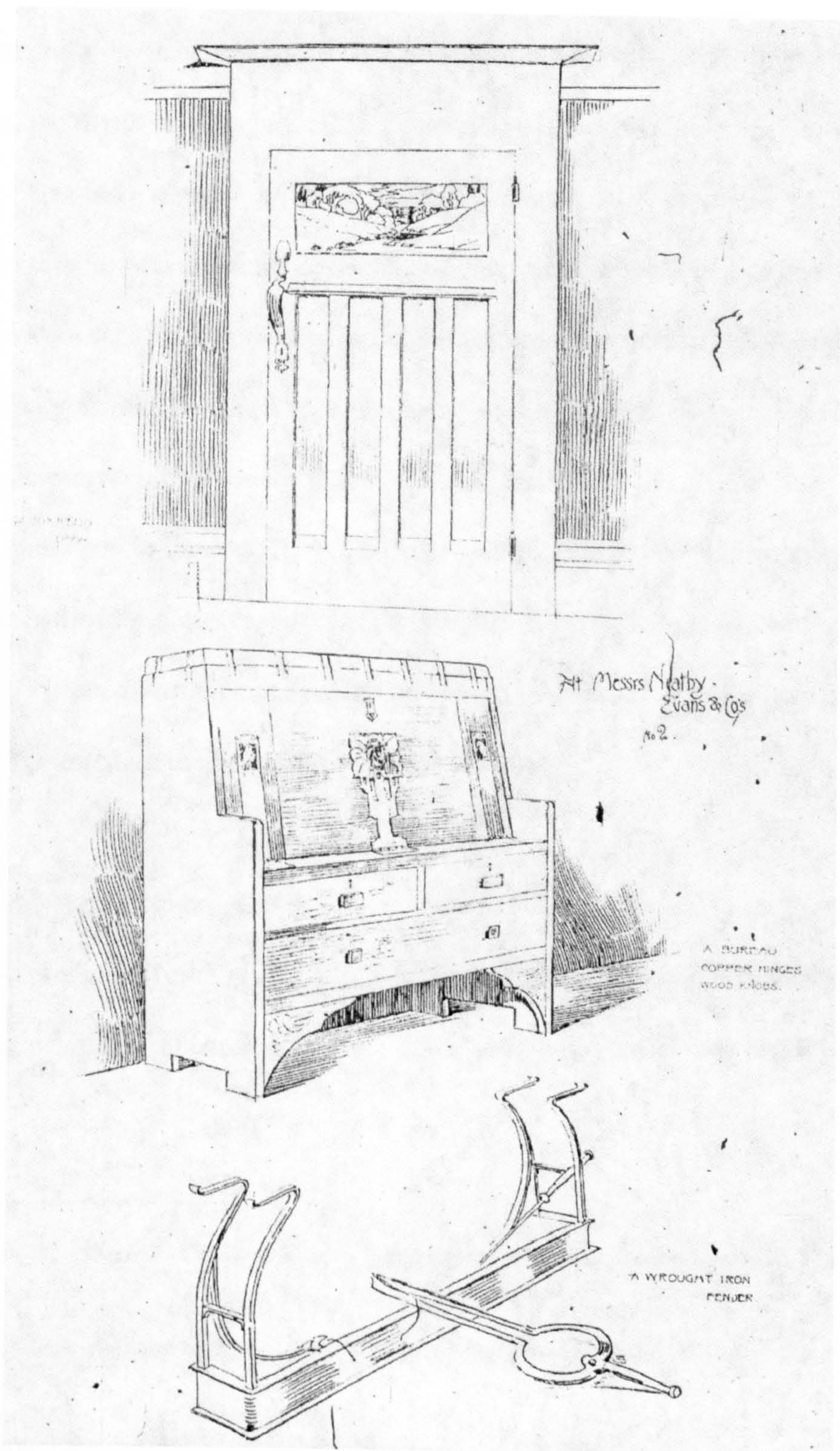


Plate 8.18. Products by Neatby and Evans published in the *British Architect* (1901).

architectural press. In what appears to be a review of the opening of the Neatby and Evans showrooms, the *British Architect* for 25th January, 1901, followed by a further notice in the next issue, illustrated a range of their products, shown here as Plates 8.17-8.18, and commented: ‘... those who desire the development of art must wish them a successful career’.³ Another review of their work appeared in the *British Architect* in June, 1901,⁴ and there was further publicity for Neatby and Evans that same year in Charles Holme’s: *Modern British Domestic Architecture and Decoration*,⁵ and the report on the Leeds Arts and Crafts Exhibition, published in the *Studio*.⁶ The year 1901 was obviously characterized by great effort on the part of the partners, both in acquiring the free publicity mentioned above and in advertizing their goods commercially as they did with the advertisement shown here in Plate 8.19, which appeared on the back cover of Holme’s book.

Their main showroom studio, shown here as Plate 8.20, was illustrated in Aymer Vallance’s article on Neatby in the *Studio* (1903).⁷ The photograph shows a room laid out with several cabinets and paintings. According to Holme, the walls were hung with amethyst coloured

³ Davison, T. Raffles : ‘At Messrs. Neatby, Evans & Co.’s’, *British Architect*, lv (1901), pp. 58, 85, and illustrations.

⁴ ‘Mantelpieces and Glasswork by Neaby, Evans and Co.’, *British Architect*, lv (1901), p. 454.

⁵ Holme, Charles (Ed.) : *Modern British Domestic Architecture and Decoration* (London : Studio Publication, 1901), pp. 128-131.

⁶ Wood, E. : ‘The Leeds Arts and Crafts Exhibition’, *Studio*, xxi (1901), pp. 253-258.

⁷ Vallance, Aymer : ‘Mr W.J. Neatby and His Work’, *Studio*, xxix (1903), p.113.

DECORATIONS: FURNITURE



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THE OFFICE OF "THE STUDIO," 1, BEDFORD SQUARE, LONDON

Plate 8.19. Advertisement for Neatby, Evans and Co., back cover of Charles Holme's: *Modern British Domestic Architecture and Decoration* (1901).

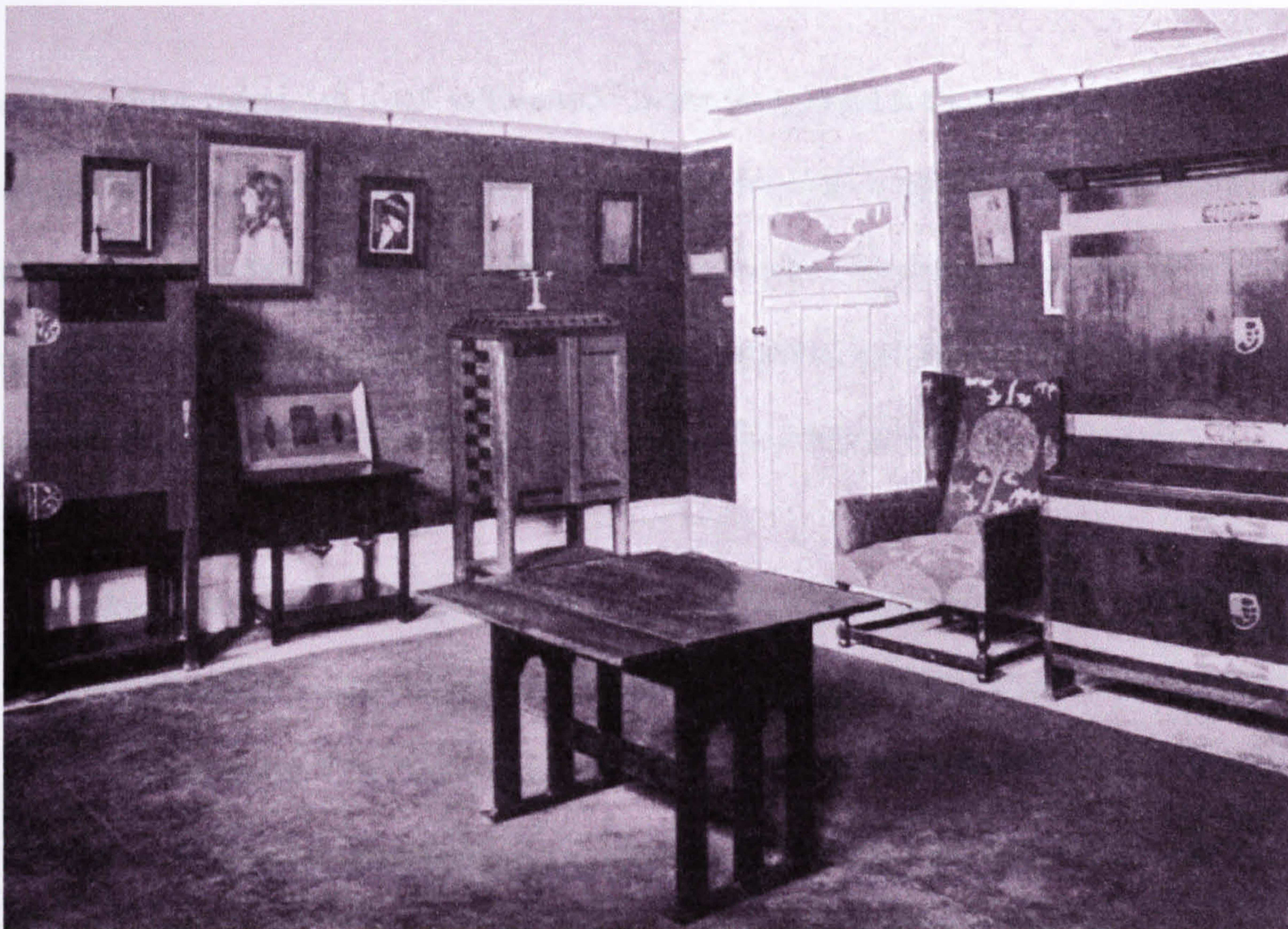


Plate 8.20. The interior of Neatby, Evans and Co.'s studio showroom, taken from the *Studio* (1903).

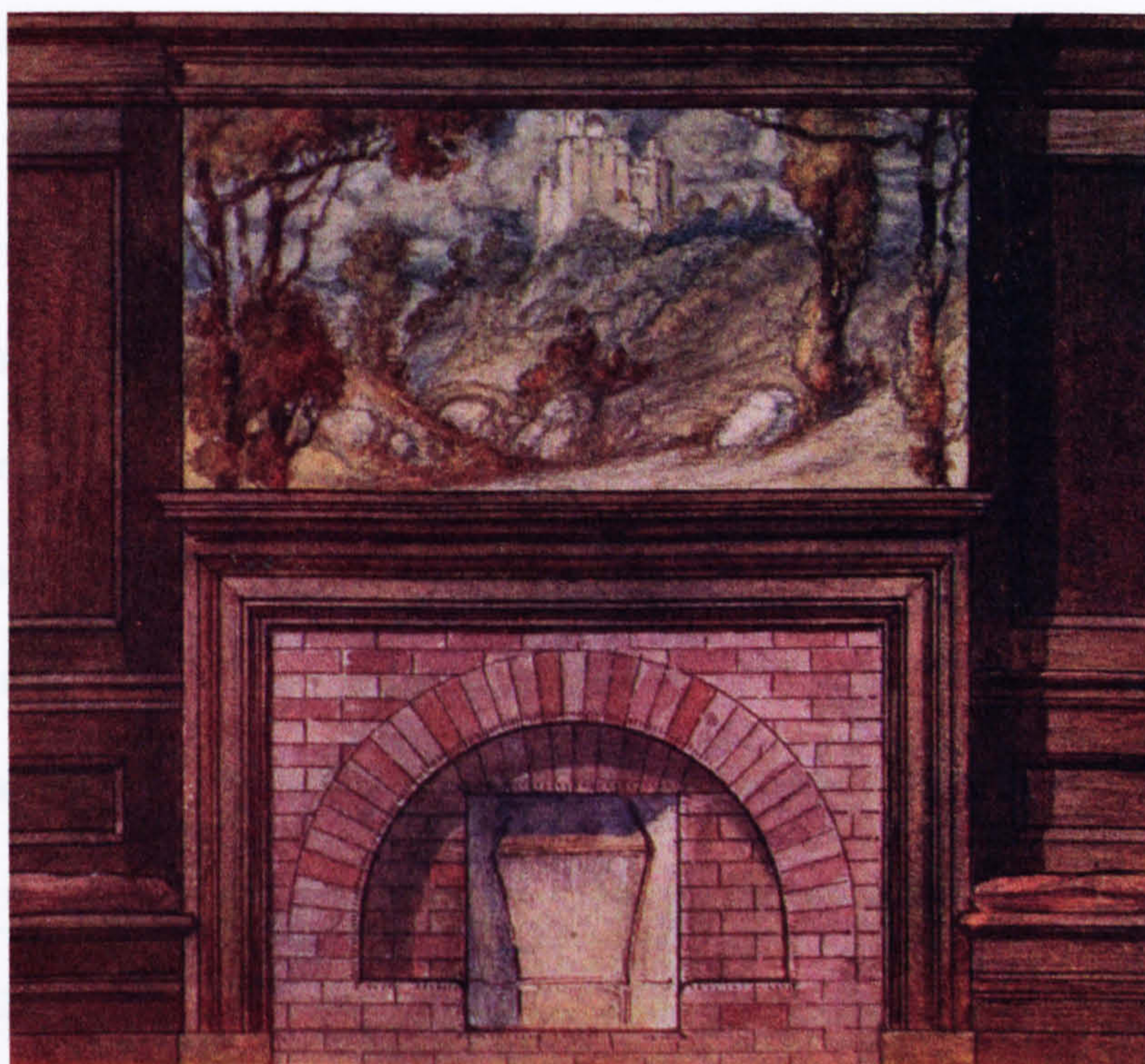


Plate 8.21. Fireplace designed by E. Hollyer Evans, Architect. Panel painted by W.J. Neatby, A.R.M.S., *Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art* (1907).

canvas and the carpet was a soft saffron red.⁸ In the foreground is the table that was pictured in *The 1901 Book*, shown here in Plate 8.11, also, the doorway is typical of those illustrated in the booklet. In his 1903 article on Neatby, Konody describes the door, saying that: 'The door and its frame are white and of extremely simple construction, and the little landscape with its silver contours and its lovely colours sparkles forth like a fine jewel'.⁹

Little is known about the workings of the firm beyond the information given in *The 1901 Book*, but it was obviously a successful concern up to 1903 when the Vallance and Konody articles discussed the contents of the Neatby and Evans studio and must have still existed up until about 1907 when the fireplace mentioned above, shown here as Plate 8.21, designed by Evans but with painted decoration by Neatby, was illustrated in the *Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art*. However, virtually every illustration pertaining to the firm's output carries Neatby's initials and when furniture, metalwork or paintings are published, Neatby is usually credited with being the artist or designer. The weight of evidence suggests that it was Neatby who was the driving force behind the venture and this very dynamism seems to have relegated E. Hollyer Evans to both contemporary and historical obscurity. There is no record of the partnership breaking up but by the time that Neatby took the position as Art Director for John Line and Sons Ltd., wallpaper manufacturers, in 1908, the partnership may have ended. Certainly by that stage, as undoubtedly before, Neatby undertook commissions outside of the Neatby, Evans and Co.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

⁹ Konody, P.G. : 'Keramischer Wandschmuck und Dekorierte Möbel von W.J. Neatby', *Kunst und Kunsthandwerk*, vi (1903). Translation by T.J.W. Morgan (1983).

corporate organization.

The question as to why Neatby was willing to leave a secure, presumably reasonably paid post as the Head of Doulton's Architectural Ceramics Department deserves some consideration. After his departure from the ceramics company, he remained on cordial terms with Doulton's and continued to execute commissions for them for several years. It would seem therefore, that the reason was not one of dissatisfaction with his employer but had rather more to do with his own artistic aspirations. In his own article 'Mural Keramics', written for the *The Art Workers' Quarterly*,¹⁰ he alludes to the problems of having to produce designs that suit the customer rather than the artist, but his frustrations were much deeper than this. In the exposure given to the new firm of Neatby and Evans by the *British Architect*, their correspondent T. Raffles Davison, who must have known Neatby from his earliest days at Burmantofts, took the opportunity to promote Neatby and his circumstances:

'Mr. W.J. Neatby should be well known to the readers of the *British Architect* for the admirable design he has done in terra cotta ornament and sculpture for the great Doulton firm. But admirable as this was, it was far from satisfying his artistic energies. His developments of tile faience productions, his fine colour schemes, his varied methods of permanent wall decoration, his metalwork, his glazing, and also his furniture designs, have proved his possession of wide artistic

¹⁰ Neatby, William James : 'Mural Keramics', *The Art Workers' Quarterly*, Volume ii, No. 6 (April 1903).

sympathies, and singular capacity for fresh and admirable developments, both in design and manufacture'.¹¹

Davison's comments sound as if they result from direct conversation with the artist and they articulate both Neatby's frustrations and rationale. That there was a close relationship between the two men is highly likely. Davison's 'Rambling Sketches', reprinted from the *British Architect*, sit side-by-side with Neatby's own drawings in the catalogues for Burmantofts and a long-lasting friendship between the two seems very plausible. In consequence, Davison would have proved the obvious choice for Neatby to channel the latter's sense of purpose to a wider public at this crucial time in his life. The quote also provides the information that even before setting up on his own behalf, Neatby had produced metalwork, stained glass and furniture. Although this was undoubtedly true, in mentioning these previous activities, psychologically Davison was imbuing Neatby's present and future work with the reliability of experience. It is hard not to believe, that Davison's article was part of a calculated collusion between the two to help his old friend. Unfortunately, few non-ceramic designs, other than graphic work, that pre-date 1901 can be identified. However, his *Garden Song*, a work in plaster illustrated as Plate 7.41, is one, and his watercolour, *Rest*, a subject from Tennyson, painted in 1897 and shown here as Plate 8.22, is another.¹² Both serve to demonstrate his wider interests and activities while professionally working as a designer of architectural ceramics.

When Neatby left his full-time post at Doulton he perhaps took less of a financial risk than

¹¹ Davison : *Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹² Taken from the *Artist*, xxv (1899), plate opposite p. 72.

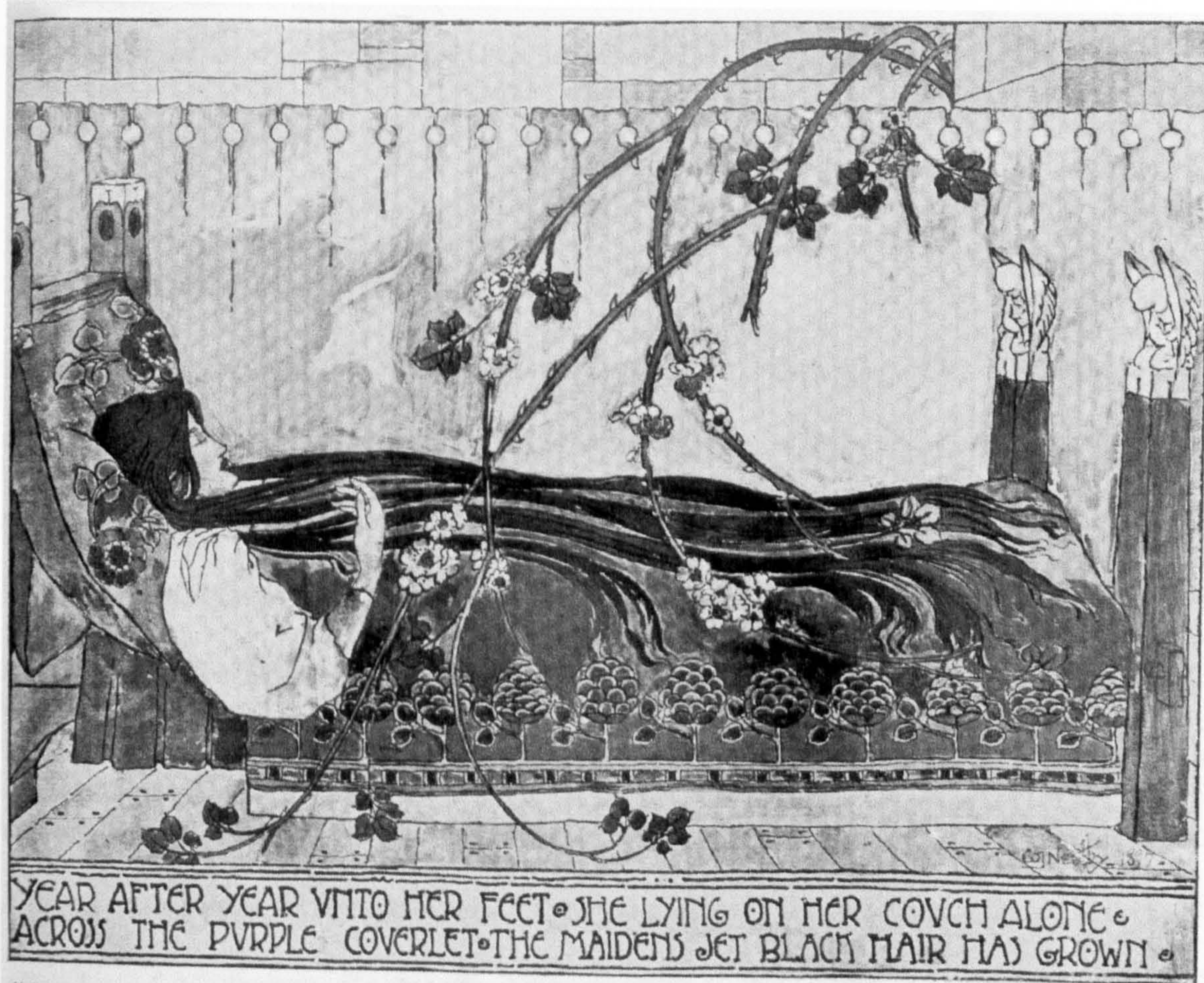


Plate 8.22. *Rest*, from the 'Sleeping Palace', Tennyson's *Day Dream*. From a design by W.J. Neatby, taken from the *Artist* (1899).

might be supposed as he seems to have continued working for the company, almost on a part-time basis. He was presumably closely involved with several on-going projects, including, no doubt, the Edward Everard Building in Bristol, and he contracted Doulton to provide ceramic components for his own commissions and they continued to rely upon his designs for work that they were undertaking.

The King's Café, Birmingham.

One of the first projects that Neatby executed as an independent designer, but using Doulton components, was the interior decoration for the King's Café at Birmingham. The decorative scheme for this building, also described as the King's Smoking Café, was commissioned by the Birmingham architects Newton and Cheadle, and resulted in some of Neatby's finest small-scale works. Konody in his 1903 article, describes the property as being a coffee-house, going on to identify the main feature of the interior as a wall-painting composed of a series of mediaeval heralds painted on a green-tiled background, with castles painted in thick impasto, in shades of gold above them.¹³ His illustration of the arrangement is reproduced here as Plate 8.23, while Plate 8.24, shows a tile that appears to come from this mural.¹⁴ Other features included stained glass by Neatby such as a series of humorous heads that decorated glass partitions used to divide the café into a number of small cubicles and Vallance mentions metalwork as well.¹⁵

¹³ Konody : *Op. cit.*, p. 48.

¹⁴ This six inch square tile is marked 'Doultons Patent Safety Back' on the reverse. Tile courtesy of Mrs. V. Neatby.

¹⁵ Vallance : *Ibid.*

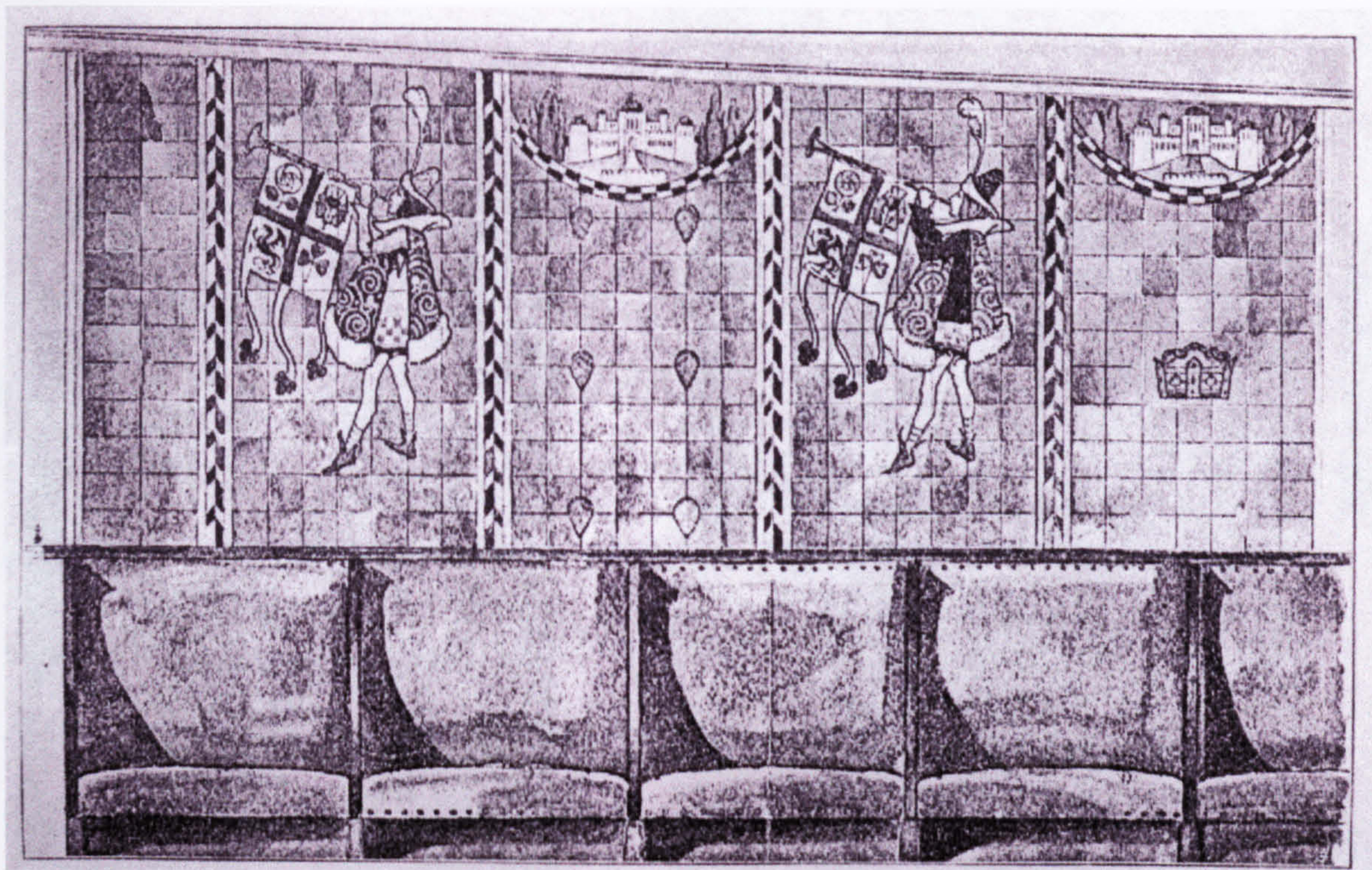


Plate 8.23. Drawing of the interior of the King's Café, Birmingham, after Konody (1903).



Plate 8.24. Doulton tile designed for the ceramic mural in the King's Café, Birmingham (1901). Private collection.



Plate 8.25. Chimney-piece panel from the King's Café, Birmingham, *Studio* (1903).

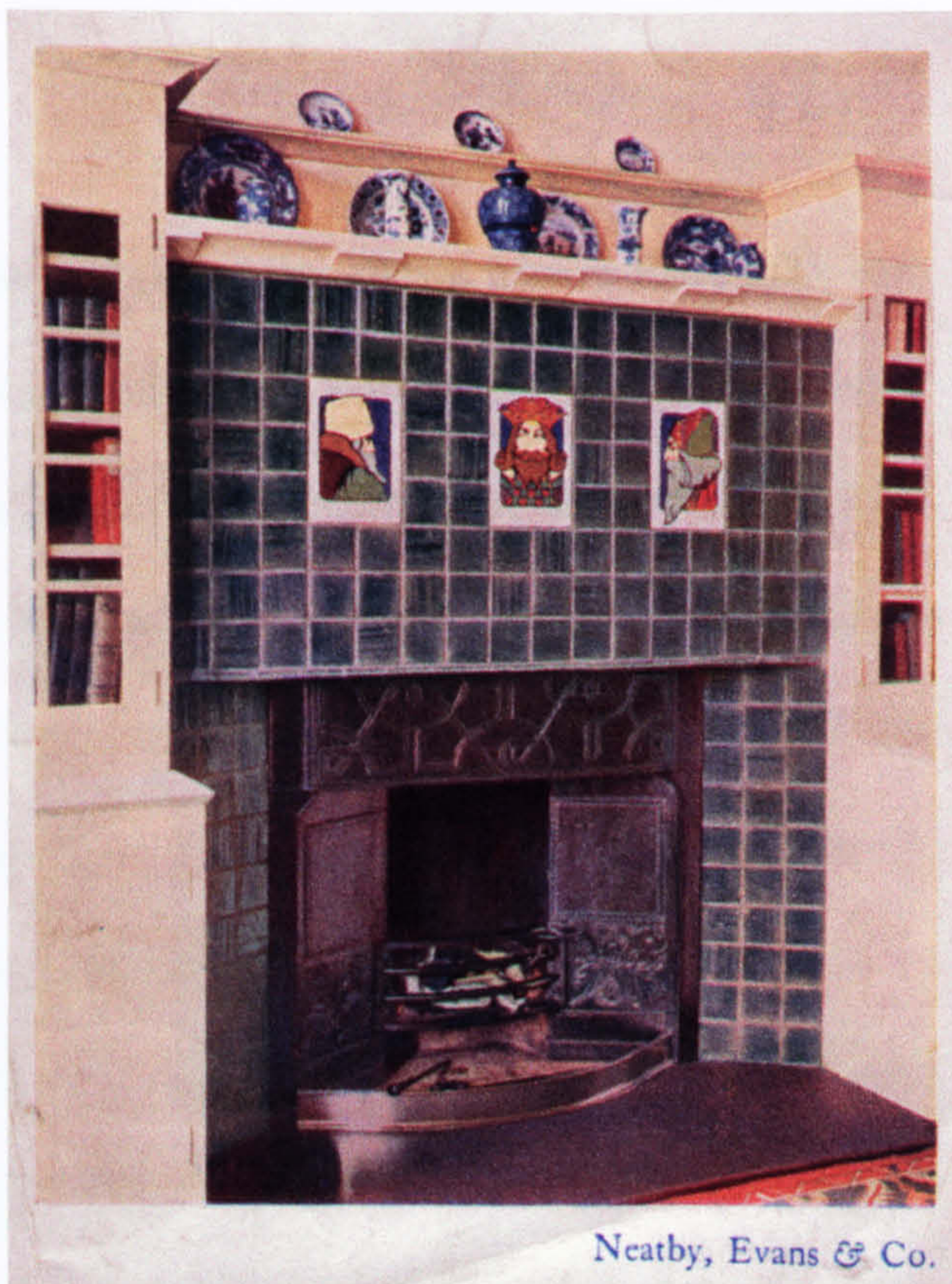


Plate 8.26. Neatby and Evans fireplace using components designed for the King's Café (1901).



Plate 8.27. Preparatory sketches for designs for the King's Café, Neatby's Notebook No. 2 (1901).



Plate 8.28. Preparatory sketches for designs for the King's Café, Neatby's Notebook No. 2 (1901).

Returning to ceramics, Vallance illustrates a tile panel of a king, shown here as Plate 8.25, that was located over the main fireplace in the café and both he and Konody illustrate other ceramic panels which were used for the Birmingham project or for other commissions at around the same period. These include ceramic panels in a variety of different techniques including an intaglio style where the main forms are cut out or recessed against the background of the surrounding tile and a block-mosaic technique where individual elements of the design are cut out and then reassembled on site to give an effect similar to that of a stained-glass cartoon. Whether all the designs produced at this time, showing mediaeval kings and courtiers, were used in the decor of the King's Café is unclear. Some may have been used elsewhere. For example, Plate 8.26, an advertising picture produced by Neatby and Evans, shows what appears to be a fire-surround in a private house rather than in a public coffee-house, yet the inset picture tiles are undoubtedly a product of the King's Café project. Although the scheme was well recorded in the contemporary art press there were numerous designs which remained either unpublished or, indeed, unexecuted. Plate 8.27, taken from one of Neaby's earlier notebooks shows other smoking kings and, taken from the same notebook, Plate 8.28 portrays a study for one of the Birmingham wall-mural heralds.¹⁶

The King's Smoking Café must have been an important showcase for Neatby's skills. Executed in 'ye olde English modern style' favoured by contemporaries who trod the difficult path

¹⁶ The date of this notebook can be determined as 1901-1902, as in addition to designs which pertain to the Birmingham Café, it contains studies for a plaster plaque by Neatby, retailed by the Teale and Somers Fireplace Company, signed and dated: 'March 1902'.

between New English Art styles and the Arts and Crafts ideal, it set the mould for a number of his future interior design schemes. Important as it may have been at the time, its subsequent destruction has caused it to be almost forgotten when compared with perhaps Neatby's most famous scheme in this vein, the Meat Hall decoration at Harrods.

Harrods Department Store.

The Harrods department store, Brompton road, London, SW1., provided Doulton with a large multi-media architectural ceramics project during 1901-02. The exterior of the building was faced with pink-coloured terracotta and on the inside the Meat Hall was decorated with Parianware tiling designed by Neatby. For whatever reason, Neatby was not finally contracted until 1902, when there were only nine weeks left until the completion date for the work. With such a short timescale Neatby seems to have been given a fairly free hand to produce the scheme, which consisted of a handpainted frieze of twenty medallions set within a background of stylized fish, birds and trees, that ran around the upper walls of the hall, other various tile wall decorations and the designing and modelling of the relief ornament of the polygonal columns for the doorways which were surmounted by golden peacocks. To organise the entire ceramic covering for such a hall, in only nine weeks, was a tremendous task. Stylistically, for the main frieze, Neatby chose to use a mediaeval theme for the decoration using scenes of hunting and falconry. The scheme, illustrated in Plates 8.29-8.35 is rendered in Neatby's characteristic graphic mural technique with strongly delineated forms, large flat areas of colour, in this instance very strong colour, and a feeling of movement produced by curvilinear elements. The latter, when associated with the stylized trees that crown the scheme, give the

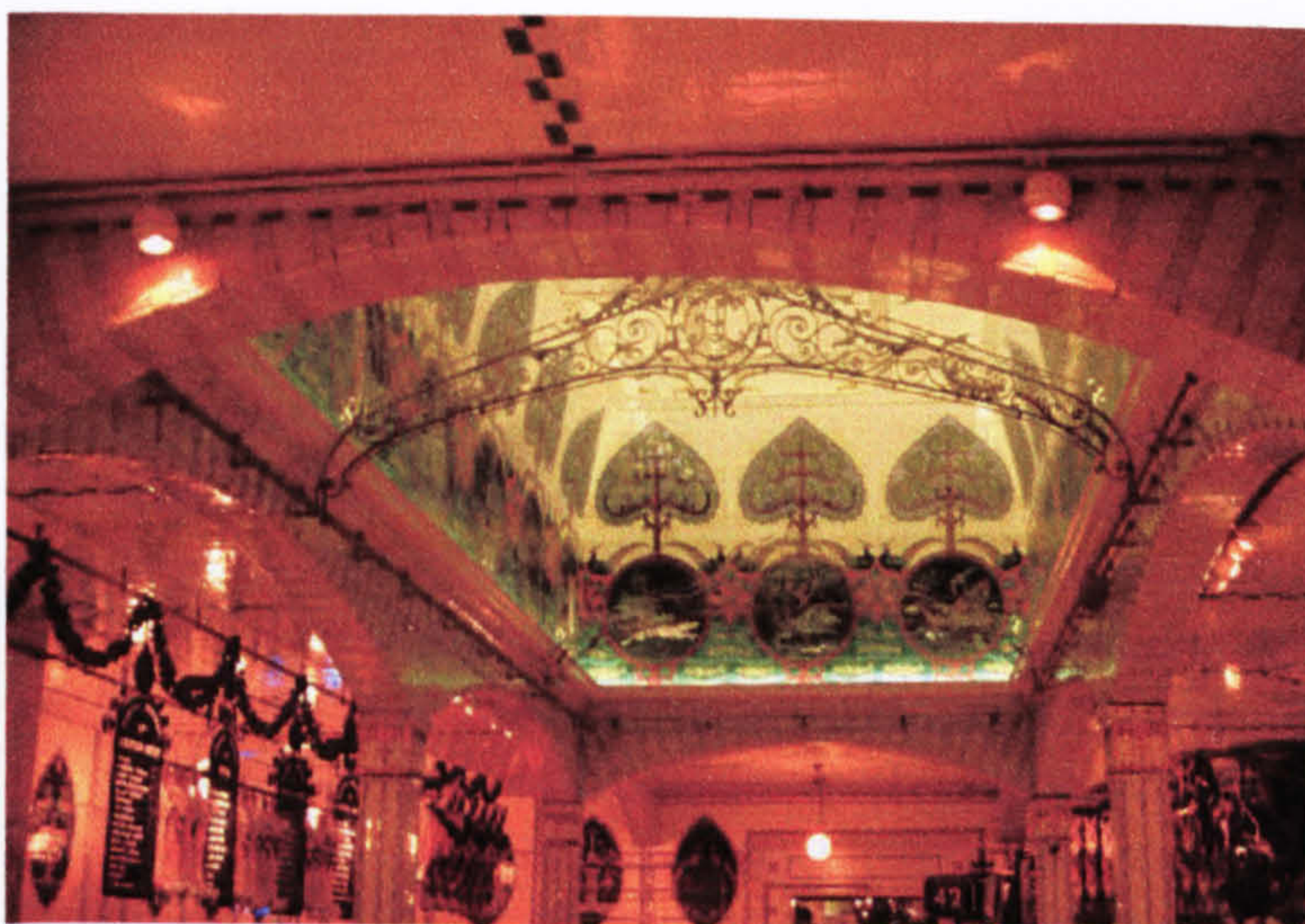


Plate 8.29. Harrods Meat Hall showing tile decoration by Neatby (1902).

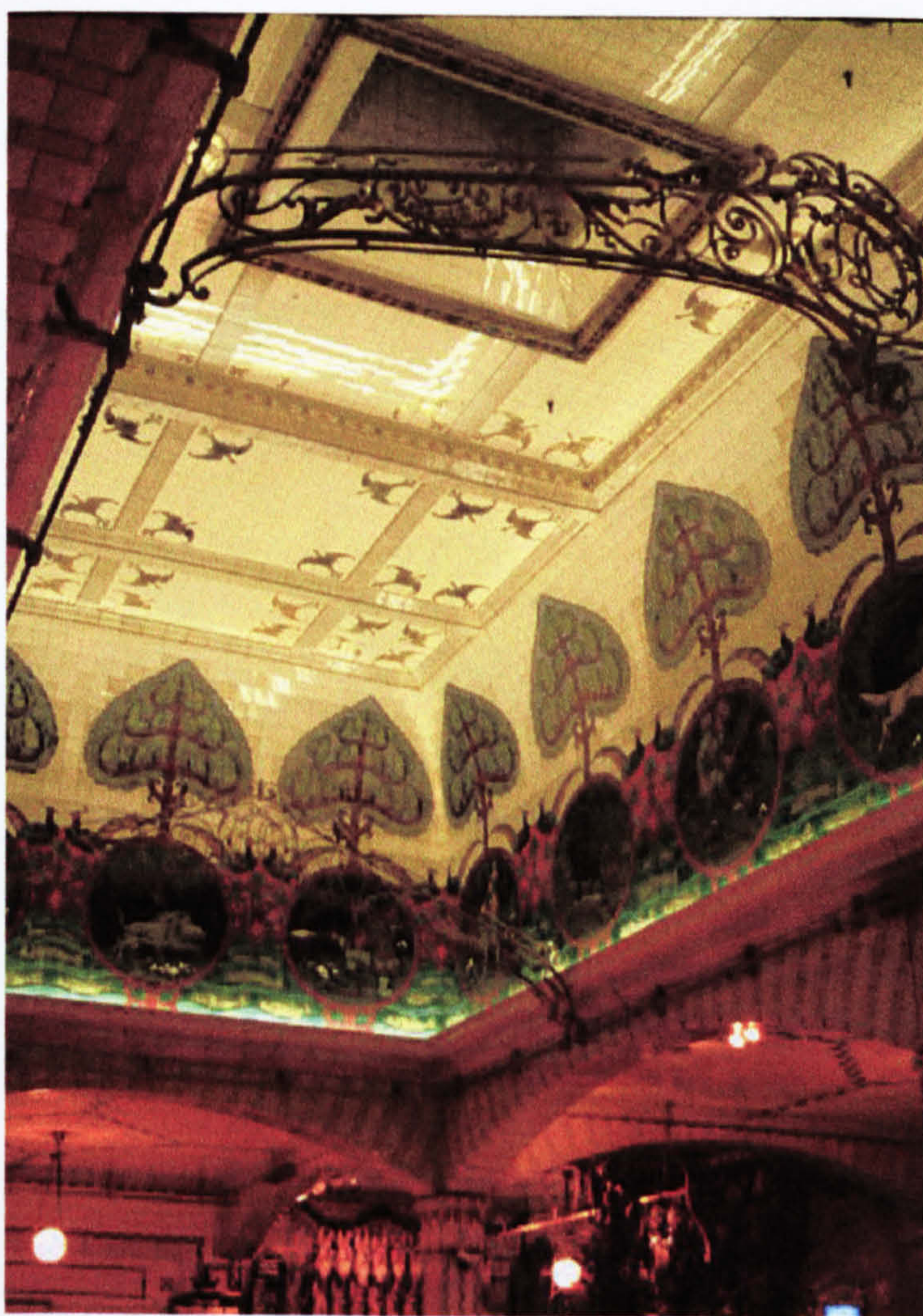


Plate 8.30. Harrods Meat Hall showing the Hunting frieze by Neatby (1902).



Plate 8.31. Harrods Meat Hall, Doulton Parianware frieze by Neatby (1902). Photograph: courtesy of Harrods.



Plate 8.32. Harrods Meat Hall, Doulton Parianware frieze by Neatby (1902). Photograph: courtesy of Harrods.



Plate 8.33. Harrods Meat Hall, detail of Doulton Parianware frieze during restoration work in 1984, Photograph: courtesy of Harrods.

*Plate 8.34. Preliminary sketch for the Harrods Meat Hall frieze, from
 Country & Poultry, Vol. 2.*



Plate 8.34. Detail of hunting dogs panel on Harrods Meat Hall frieze. Photograph: courtesy of Harrods.



Plate 8.35. Preliminary sketch for the Harrods Meat Hall frieze from Neatby's Notebook No. 3.

whole an air of Art Nouveau gaiety but there little of the exuberance that would be encountered in Continental work and the vision is realized within the more conservative constraints of English New Art.

Other designs for Doulton.

Although the Harrods scheme was the most important project that Neatby undertook for Doulton as a sub-contractor, nevertheless he continued to produce designs for the Company possibly up until as late as 1904, when one of his designs, shown here as Plate 8.36, for an Art Nouveau styled fireplace was published in a Company catalogue.¹⁷ Although the artwork in the catalogue seems to have been by several different hands, apart from a few illustrations, including the front cover, signed 'A.E.P.' (indicating that this was the person in charge of the graphics for the publication), Neatby was the only other artist permitted to sign his name on his own design. Indeed, Doulton still recognized Neatby's worth as a designer of ceramics up until at least 1906 when one of his designs, for a garden seat in terracotta, shown here as Plate 8.37, was published bearing the legend: 'Designed by W.J. Neatby, A.R.M.S.',¹⁸ acknowledging that Neatby had become an Associate of the Royal Society of Miniature Painters that year, although the design dated back to 1896 when it had first been seen in the pages of the *British Architect*.¹⁹

¹⁷ *Royal Doulton Potteries Section No. 80 Glazed Ware Fire Places* (London : Doulton, 1904), p. 80-10.

¹⁸ *The Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art* (London : Studio Publication, 1906), p. 276.

¹⁹ *British Architect*, xlv (1896), p. 199 and accompanying illustrations.

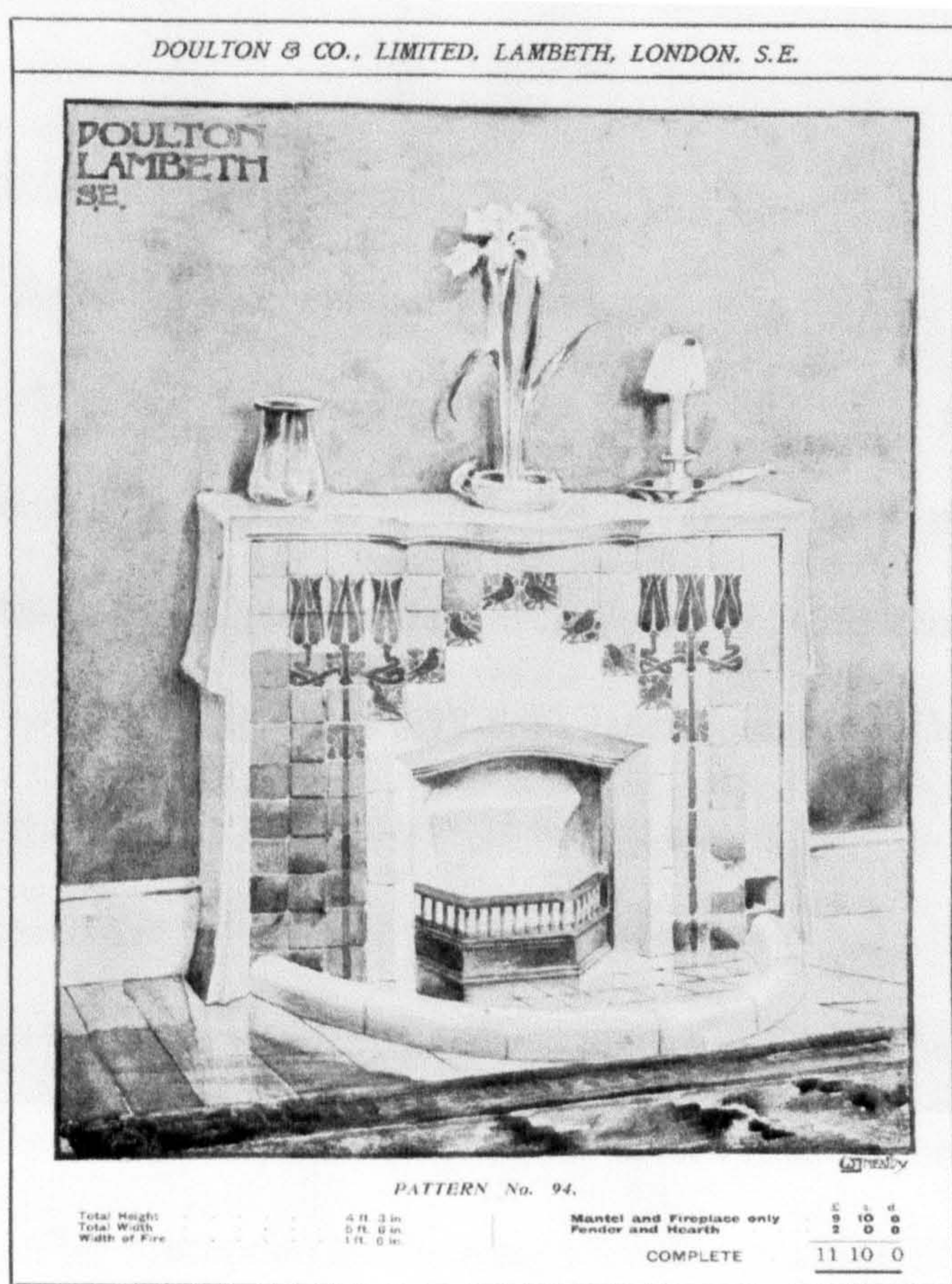
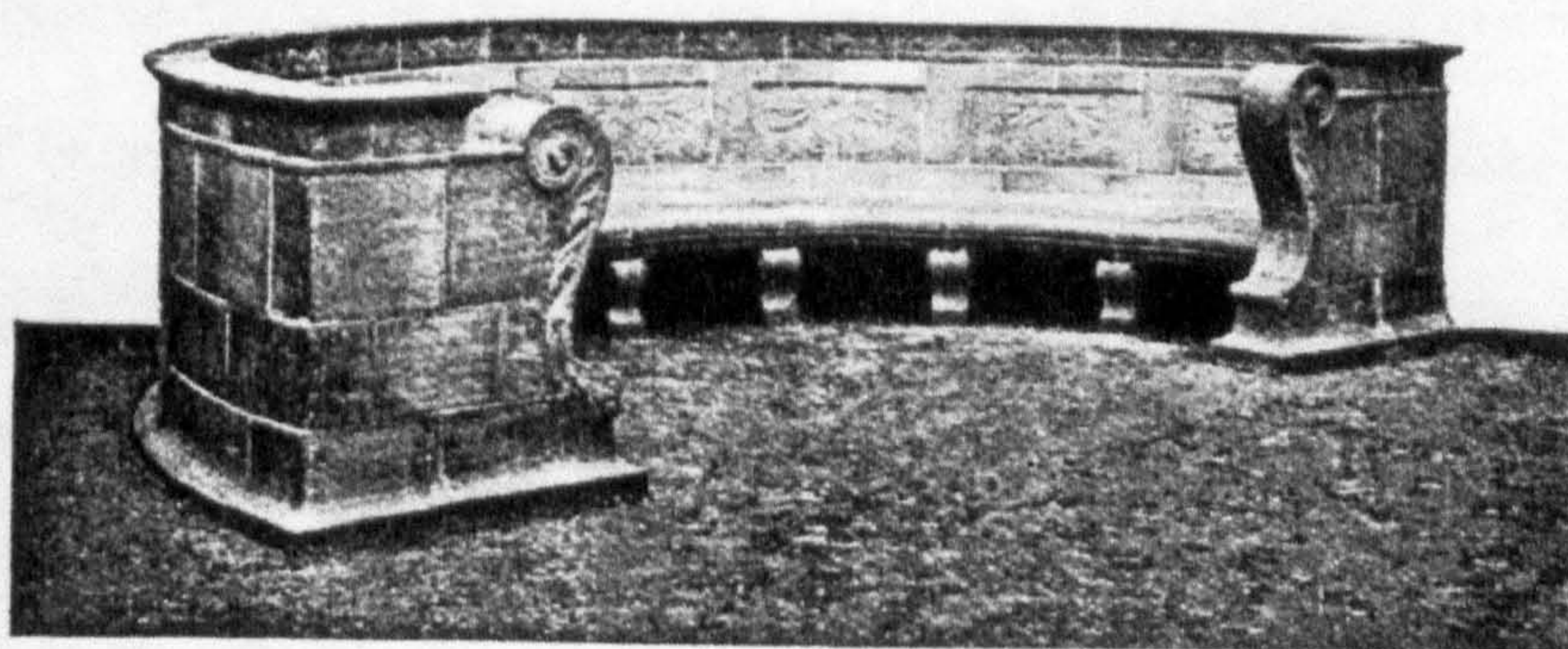


Plate 8.36. Fireplace design by Neatby taken from a Doulton trade catalogue (1904).



GARDEN SEAT IN TERRA-COTTA DESIGNED BY W. J. NEATBY, A.R.M.S.
EXECUTED BY DOULTON & CO., LTD., LAMBETH

Plate 8.37. Doulton terracotta garden seat designed by Neatby (c.1896), taken from the *Studio Yearbook* (1906).

Works in association with Ernest Runtz.

However, Neatby did not have to rely upon Doulton for work in the early years of the century. In 1903 he was working with his old friend Ernest Runtz on modelled plaster decoration for the new Gaiety Theatre, London.²⁰ The *British Architect* report on the project credits Neatby with producing 'bold winged figures and modelling', for the auditorium. No records of this decoration appear to survive but Plates 8.38-8.40, taken from two of Neatby's sketchbooks would appear to represent his initial ideas for the decorative scheme. Runtz also built the adjoining Gaiety Restaurant, which Neatby also appears to have had a hand in decorating. In one of his notebooks is the legend 'Gaiety Smokers' and on several of the nearby pages can be found sketches of smoking men, as shown in Plate 8.41. Presumably Neatby had in mind a virtual duplication of his conception for the King's Smoking Café in Birmingham.

Another project, not in association with Runtz, that included mysterious female figures was the scheme for the Masonic Hall at the Restaurant Frascati, in Oxford Street, London, that Neatby worked on at about this time. Although there are no extant records of his membership, it seems virtually certain that Neatby was a freemason and would therefore have been an ideal choice to decorate a Masonic Hall. In the early years of the 20th century numerous private concerns such as restaurants set up lodge rooms in London and records of these and their membership

²⁰ 'New Gaiety Theatre', *British Architect*, lx (1903), pp. 295-306.



Plate 8.38. Preliminary sketches of figures, probably for the Gaiety Theatre. Neatby Notebook No. 9.

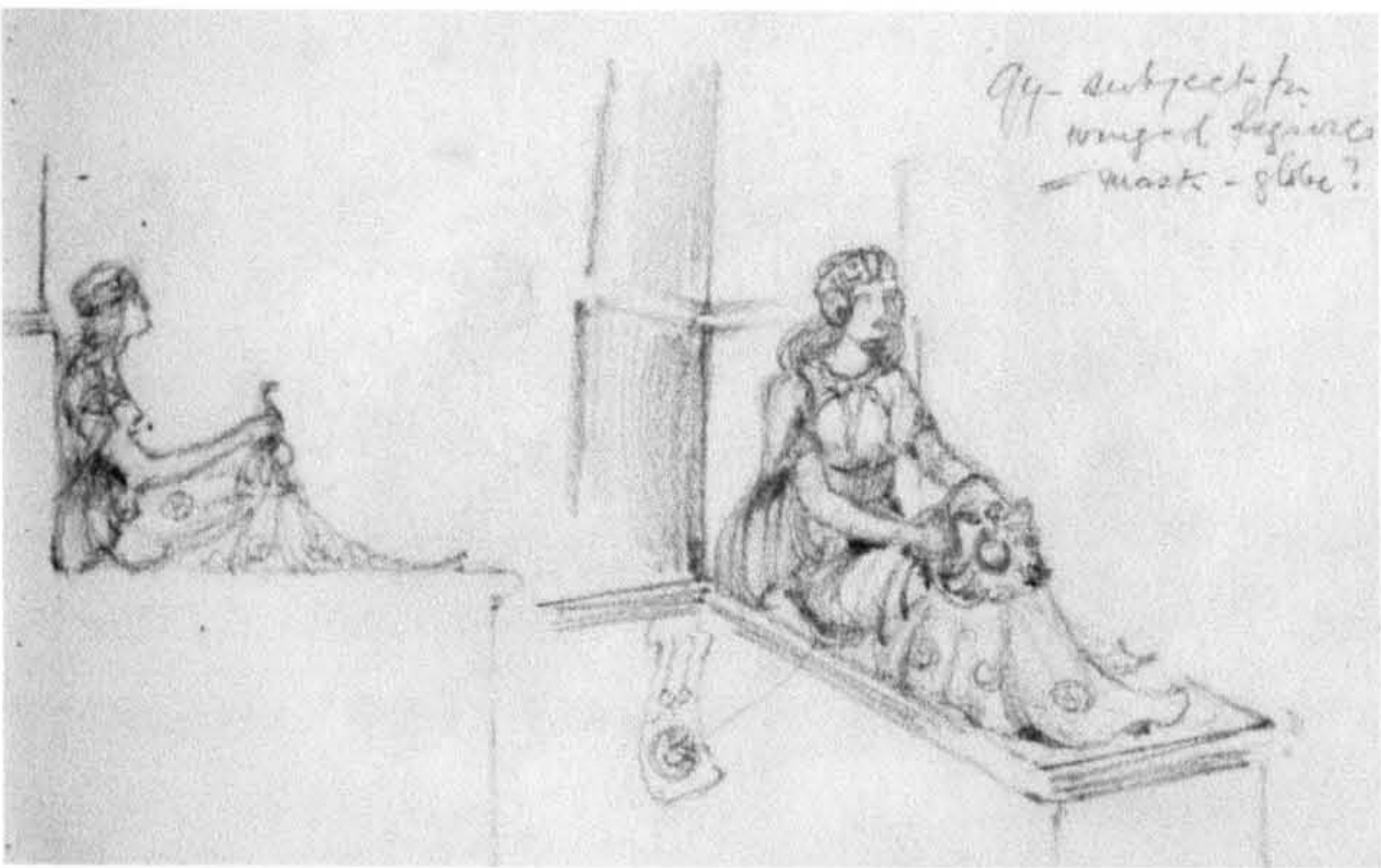


Plate 8.39. Preliminary sketches of figures, probably for the Gaiety Theatre. Neatby Notebook No. 9.



Plate 8.40. Preliminary sketches of figures, probably for the Gaiety Theatre. Neatby Notebook No. 4.



Plate 8.41. Preliminary sketches of smoking figures, probably for the Gaiety Restaurant. Neatby Notebook No. 4.

are less than comprehensive.²¹ However, both Vallance and Konody mention this work in their respective 1903 articles. Vallance mentions three large mural frescoes portraying three throned female figures attended by leopards, peacocks and serpents but Konody is much more detailed. He gives an account of Neatby's mural and relates them to the Masonic symbolism. Unfortunately there do not appear to be any extant photographs of the scheme.

Another project that brought together the talents of Ernest Runtz and Neatby, in 1904, was the new Theatre Royal, Birmingham. In 1906, the *Studio* published a series of three painted medallions by Neatby, two of which are reproduced as Plates 8.42-8.43, from the building. According to the accompanying text, Neatby was responsible for the internal colour scheme for the decorations, one of the most noticeable components of which was the series of oval medallions that were positioned over the range of boxes on each side of the house. These medallions portrayed a history of costume and were framed in wreathwork. Other decorations for the theatre, by Neatby, included a long painting over the proscenium. This painting, described as being in very rich colours represented two aspects of the stage as a teaching institution, showing its gay side and its grave.²² The painting, which has not been published previously, is shown here in Plates 8.44-8.45. As can be seen on the close-up view of the picture, once again Neatby chose a quasi-mediaeval setting for his composition which groups the more serious concerns of the theatre: 'The Theme'; 'The Homily'; 'The Love Story';

²¹ Information from J.M. Hamill, Librarian and Curator, United Grand Lodge of England, Freemasons' Hall, London, in a letter dated 27th March, 1992.

²² 'Studio Talk', *Studio*, xxxvi (1906), pp. 162-163.



Plate 8.42. Painted costume figure, Theatre Royal, Birmingham.



Plate 8.43. Painted costume figure, Theatre Royal, Birmingham.



Plate 8.44. Auditorium, Theatre Royal, Birmingham, showing the Neatby mural above the proscenium arch. Photograph: courtesy of the National Monuments Record, Crown copyright.

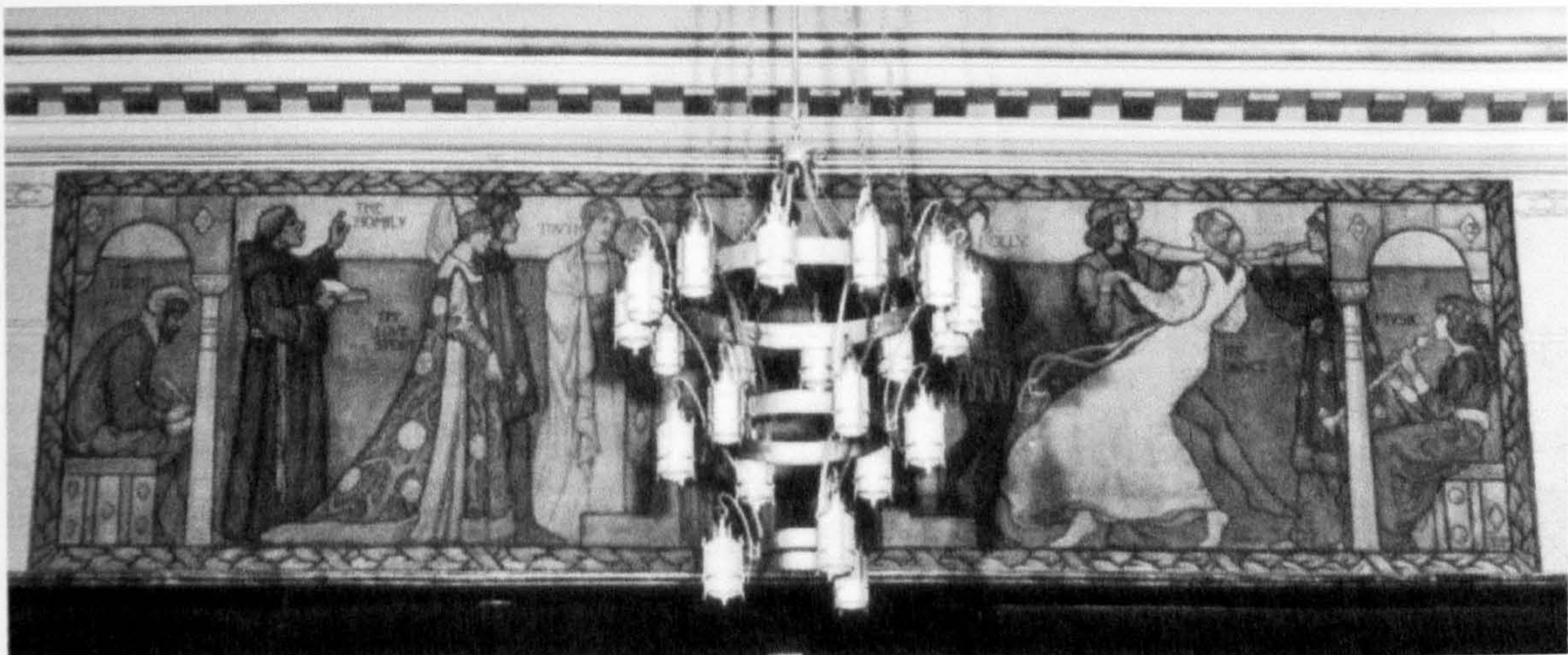


Plate 8.45. Theatre Royal, Birmingham, showing the Neatby mural above the proscenium arch. Photograph: courtesy of the National Monuments Record, Crown copyright.

‘Truth’; on the left-hand side of the painting with the lighter attributes: ‘Folly’; ‘The Dance’; ‘Music’; on the right, with both sets of figures adjacent to a central seated female figure, presumably the ‘Theatrical Muse’.

Works in association with George Skipper.

Runtz was one of Neatby’s most important patrons in the first decade of the 20th century and the projects outlined above were probably not the only ones that jointly occupied the two men. However, he was not the only patron who employed Neatby on large scale contracts at this time and of equal importance was the Norwich architect George Skipper. Between 1901-06 and 1904-11 he was busy working on two projects that can definitely be associated with Neatby; they were, respectively, the Norwich Union Life Insurance Society’s Head Offices, Norwich, and Sennowe Park, Guist, Norfolk, a large country house. A somewhat vague reference, in one of Neatby’s notebooks, to Skipper’s Royal Norfolk and Suffolk Yacht Club House, Lowestoft, 1902-03, suggests that he was involved in that project as well, but other evidence has not been forthcoming.²³

In an article published in the *Architectural Review* in 1908, Neatby is listed among other contractors, who worked on the Norwich Union Offices, as being responsible for stained glass, leaded lights and the painted frieze in the Directors’ Luncheon Room.²⁴ In fact, as Plates 8.46-

²³ Notebook No. 2. The name of the building is mentioned along with what appear to be notes for a sketch of the building.

²⁴ Skipper, G.J. and F.W. : ‘The Norwich Union Life Insurance Society’s Head Offices, Norwich’, *Architectural Review*, xxiii (1908), pp. 73-77.

8.57 show, the Luncheon Room included a good deal of glazing and it is probable that most of Neatby's contribution to the glass in the building was confined to this particular location.

The subject matter chosen for the frieze, which appears to have been painted in oils on a series of canvas panels, was the mediaeval hunt and the ensuing feast. In the various panels horsemen hunt boar and deer, waterfowl are pursued by a female falconer and an archer, and a series of colourfully dressed servants relay the cooked animals to the table, announced by a master-of-ceremonies. The theme owes much to Neatby's earlier work at Harrods and seems particularly appropriate for a luncheon room. However, as if to instill a modicum of humility into those 'feasting' in the room, a picture of St. Hubert is included in the design. Hubert, the patron saint of huntsmen was initially a nobleman who lived in what is now Belgium in the late 7th-early 8th century. According to his legend he devoted himself to worldly pursuits of pleasure and accumulating wealth. However, on one particular Good Friday, when he should have been attending church services, he preferred to indulge one of his great passions, hunting, in the forest of the Ardennes. While in a dense part of the forest he had a vision of a large white stag with a brilliant silver crucifix between its antlers who admonished him, directing him to seek guidance from Bishop Lambert of Maastricht, who subsequently persuaded Hubert to change his ways and to become a priest. It was, perhaps, a tongue-in-cheek, reminder, by Neatby to the Norwich Directors, of their responsibility to their clients.

The paintings were executed in what had become Neatby's characteristic mural style, easily adapted for either ceramic, painted or bas-relief plaster formats. As this scheme is painted in



Plate 8.46. Interior of the Directors' Luncheon Room, Norwich Union Head Offices, Norwich, showing the Neatby murals. Photograph: courtesy of Norwich Union.



Plate 8.47. Interior of the Directors' Luncheon Room, Norwich Union Head Offices, Norwich, showing the Neatby murals and glazing. Photograph: courtesy of Norwich Union.



Plate 8.48. Norwich Union, mural panel showing St. Hubert (1904). Photograph: courtesy of Norwich Union.

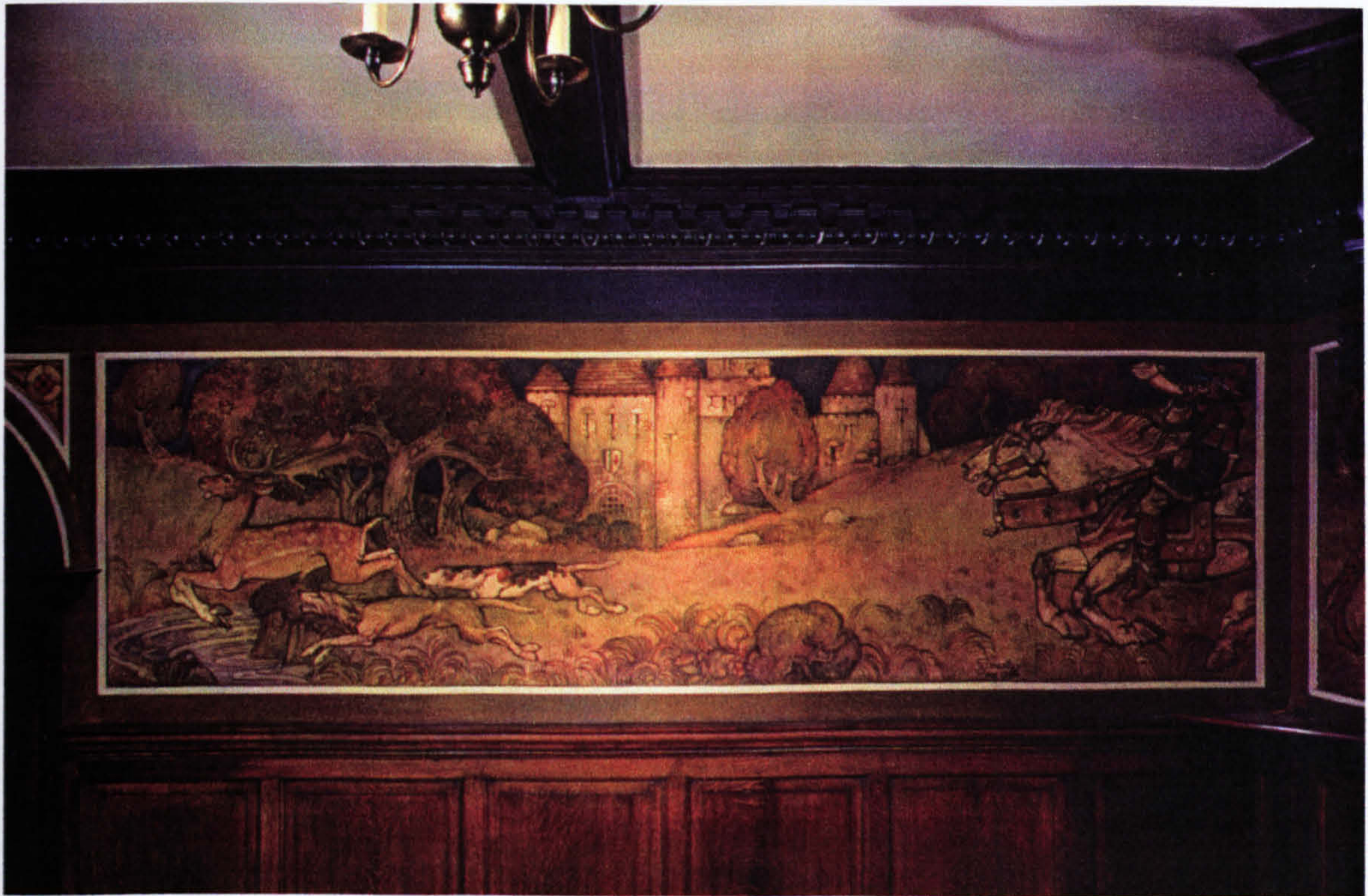


Plate 8.49. Norwich Union, mural panel showing stag hunt (1904). Photograph: courtesy of Norwich Union.



Plate 8.50. Norwich Union, mural panel showing boar hunt, Neatby (1904). Photograph: courtesy of Norwich Union.



Plate 8.51. Norwich Union, Lady falconer panel. Photograph: courtesy of Norwich Union.



Plate 8.52. Norwich Union, lunette panel showing a hawk attacking a crane. Photograph: courtesy of Norwich Union.



Plate 8.53. Norwich Union, mural panel with archer. Photograph: courtesy of Norwich Union.



Plate 8.54. Norwich Union, panel showing shot fowl. Photograph: courtesy of Norwich Union.



Plate 8.55. Norwich Union, mural panels showing servants carrying the cooked prey to the feast. Photograph: courtesy of Norwich Union.

oils and was designed to be viewed at close quarters there is much more attention to detail than is usual in his ceramic murals and more of an attempt to produce a three-dimensional quality in the figures, particularly through shading. However, essentially, the heavy black outlines around each figure betray Neatby's lack of artistic training and show only too clearly his roots as a graphic artist rather than a painter. His figure types and subject matter show the influence of the artist John Byam Shaw and the late Victorian romantic style of which he was a principal advocate, yet are in a heavy cartoon-like manner, more suited to book illustration than canvas painting. In effect Neatby's mural is the equivalent of a visual fairy story. Figures such as the female falconer, shown here in Plate 8.51, who seems to be taken almost directly from the Harrods figure shown in Plate 8.33, add a sense of elegance and romance to the scheme, acting as a counterpoint to the action displayed in the mounted huntsmen panels, while the wooden panelling and heavily leaded windows, with their thick, slightly blue-coloured hand-made glass, add a touch of 'quaintness'. Once again, Neatby had produced a decorative scheme in the contemporary style of the 'olde English teashoppe'.

Most of the paintings were published in the *Studio* in 1905 but without any comment.²⁵ Several of the panels display the date of 1904 along with Neatby's initials revealing that they were contemporary with his large painting for the Theatre Royal, Birmingham, a work with which they show, not surprisingly, a marked similarity. Presumably, Neatby's contribution to Skipper's Norwich building was confined to that year. The work was probably done in Neatby's studio and then transported to Norwich. Plate 8.58 shows Neatby's own

²⁵ 'Studio-Talk', *Studio*, xxxiii (1905), pp. 353-354.

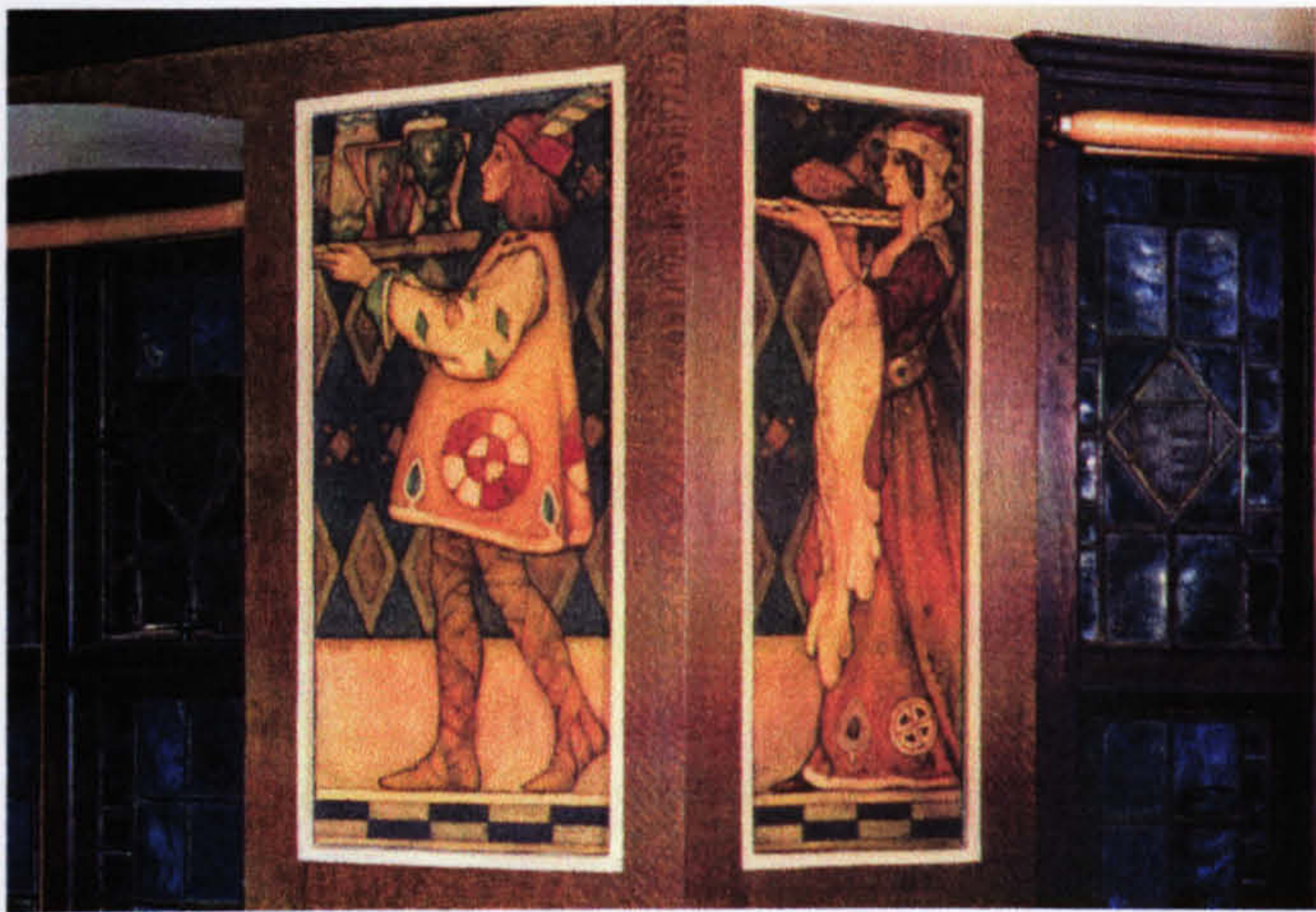


Plate 8.56. Norwich Union, mural panels showing servants carrying the cooked prey to the feast. Photograph: courtesy of Norwich Union.

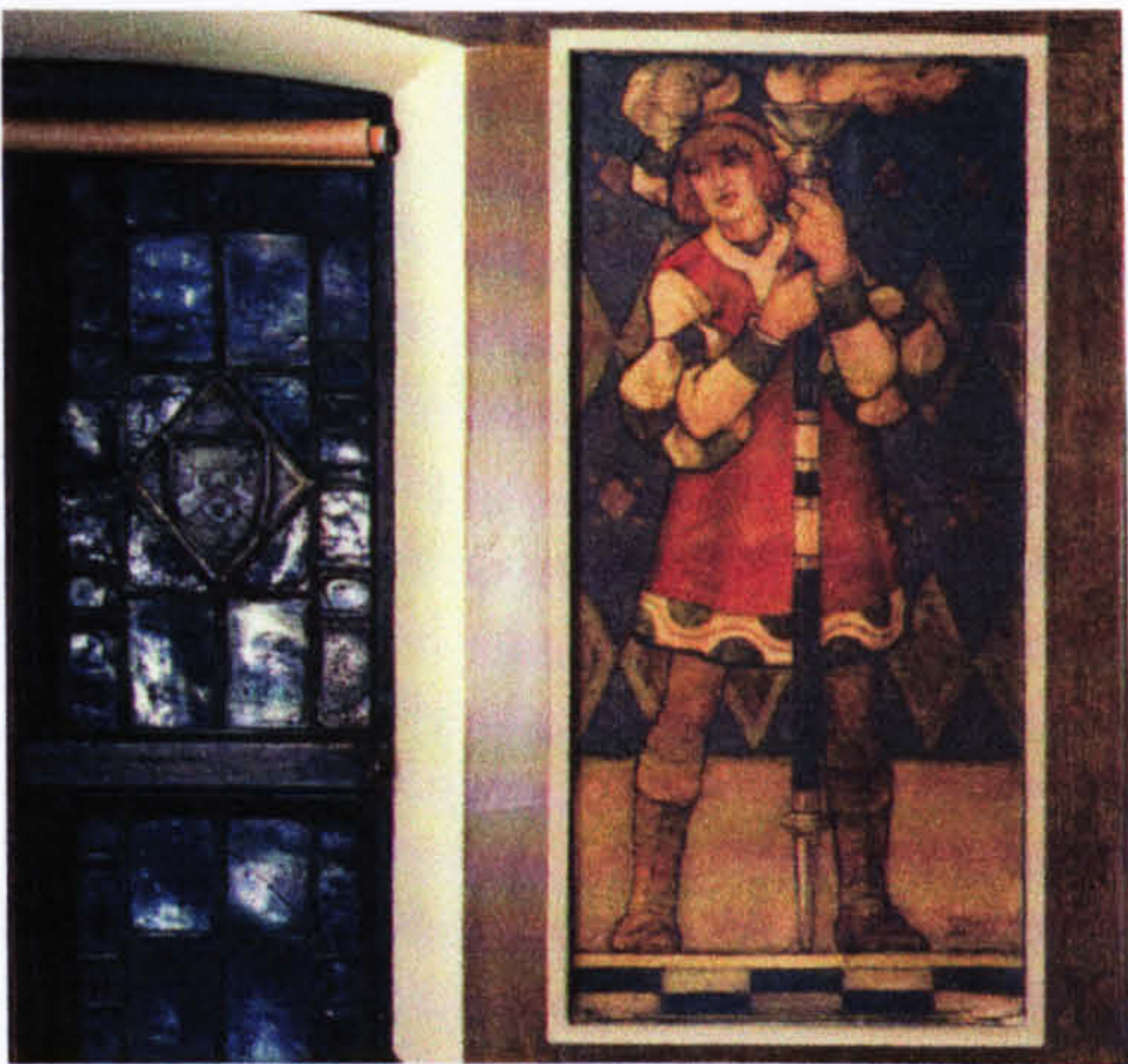


Plate 8.57. Norwich Union, panels showing a torch-bearer. Photograph: courtesy of Norwich Union.



Plate 8.58. Neatby's own photographic record of his mural scheme for the Norwich Union Headquarters Building, Norwich. Photograph: private collection.

photographic record of the work.²⁶

The second project that he worked on for Skipper at this time was also a series of murals used to decorate a corridor at the large country house of Sennowe Park. Here, Neatby produced a collection of twelve lunette-shaped paintings which graced the walls above a number of wooden wall panels and doorways in an internal corridor formed from a series of archways joined by low circular domes. Plate 8.59 illustrates two such panels located on the upper frieze section of the walling below one of the internal domes.

The theme chosen for the paintings was country sports, no doubt contrived to appeal to the owner of a grand country mansion, but on this occasion, rather uncharacteristically, set in what appears to be late 18th-century costume. The depictions of these sports include pictures of fox hunting, shooting game birds and fishing. They are painted in oil on canvas which was glued directly onto the wall surface. Stylistically they are quite different to the Norwich Union murals discussed above. As can be seen in Plate 8.60, the same heavy outlines for the figures and other principal forms are still present, although now executed in a dark-brown line rather than black, but the paintings are much more naturalistic, the figures are more fluid and the compositions, as a whole, have more depth, being set, as can be seen in Plates 8.60-8.61, in English landscapes often with distant horizons. Also, no longer is the main subject or action confined

²⁶ Photograph: private collection. Unfortunately, this series of murals is no longer intact. The decoration of one wall of the Luncheon Room, including the 'Lady with Hawk' panel, the 'Crane and Hawk' lunette and a stain-glass window was destroyed in a renovation in the 1970s and the rest of the panels were sealed, though left untouched, behind plaster-board walling. Information from S. Leeds, Museum Curator, Norwich Union, 1995.



Plate 8.59. Sennowe Park, Norfolk, painted lunettes by Neatby, forming part of a scheme of mural decoration in an internal corridor.



Plate 8.60. Sennowe Park, Norfolk, detail of mural decoration by Neatby.



Plate 8.61. Sennowe Park, Norfolk, mural panel by Neatby, showing his landscape painting style.

Unlike the Norwich School murals which can be dated to 1804, the Sennowe Park Gallery is



Plate 8.62. Wall decorations in tempera by Neatby, taken from the *Studio Yearbook* (1906).

The Studio Yearbook of Illustration for Children (London: Studio Publications, 1906), p. 125.

to a narrow plane at the front of the picture but commands the mid-ground, again adding illusionistic depth. In general, although there is an element at work here of choosing the style to fit the location, this change reflects greater experience on Neatby's part, with these works post-dating those at Birmingham and Norwich. Certainly, they show him using some of the skills acquired through other areas of his decorative work such as wallpaper design. Since at least as early as 1904 Neatby had been designing wallpapers for the London firm of Jeffrey and Co., and as part of his work in interior decoration associated with patterned wallpapers he had developed the technique of freehand-painted frieze decoration in tempera to run above the pattern. These friezes were usually continuous landscapes and the example that can be seen in Plate 8.62, reproduced from the *Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art* (1906), is in a distinctly comparable style to the landscape shown in Plate 8.61.²⁷

Unlike the Norwich Union murals which can be dated to 1904, the Sennowe Park designs seem to have occupied Neatby over a period of several years. All of the canvases, except one, carry the date 1908, the exception being the lunette portraying a fisherman, seen here as Plate 8.63, which is signed 'W.J. NEATBY 1909' at the bottom on the right-hand side of the picture, but on the left as 'W.J. Neatby Nov. 1906'. The change from the earlier lower-case letters to upper case by 1909 is interesting but so too, is the length of time that this picture took to paint. Plate 8.64 shows the same painting reproduced as a colour print on plain white paper, presumably for an, as yet, untraced publication or as a record for Neatby to use in future promotional

²⁷ *Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art* (London : Studio Publication, 1906), p. 115.



Plate 8.63. Sennowe Park, Norfolk, lunette panel of a fisherman, painted by Neatby.



Plate 8.64. Print of the design above in Plate 8.63. Private collection.



Plate 8.65. Sennowe Park, Norfolk, lunette panel showing a fox hunt, painted by Neatby.



Plate 8.66. Original watercolour design for Plate 8.65. above, signed and dated for 1905. Private collection.

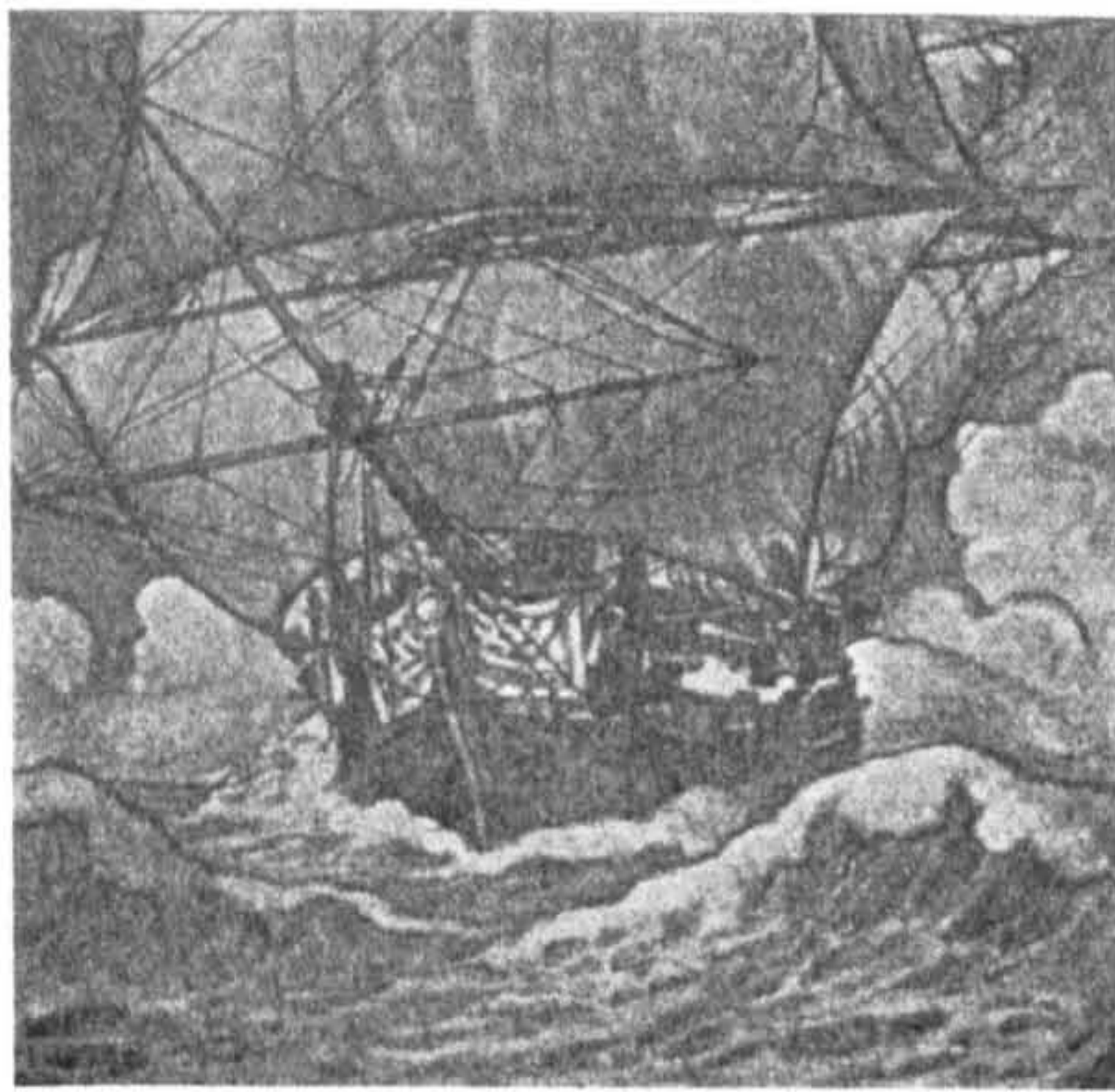
exercises.²⁸ Further evidence relating to the chronology involved for the execution of the project can be seen in evidence relating to the picture shown in Plate 8.65. The original watercolour painting for this picture still exists, shown as Plate 8.66, and this bears the legend 'W.J. Neatby A.R.M.S. 56 Glebe Place, Chelsea S.W Dec 1905'. This shows that the designs were begun as early as 1905, and that this form of decoration was probably envisaged for the corridor from the very start of the contract, by Skipper, in 1904. One point of interest is that Neatby did not become A.R.M.S. until 1906 and it is very noticeable that this title has been added later than the original inscription and in a slightly lighter ink.²⁹ From Neatby's point of view the fact that there did not appear to be undue haste required for the completion of the murals must have been a bonus, allowing him to work on other projects. Certainly, the final canvases were prepared in his studio and some of his initial measured lines still exist along the lower edge of some of the pictures indicating that his original measurements were too small and that an additional 20mm of painting had to be added to the bottom of each picture, leaving his original lower frame line, in pencil, sealed beneath the paint. From a critical point of view these pictures probably represent the best of Neatby's painted mural schemes and his most successful departure from a purely two-dimensional graphic style.

Other painted mural schemes.

The final major scheme of decoration dealt with here concerns his work for the architect Charles Fitzroy Doll. Although Neatby probably worked with Doll on several occasions,

²⁸ Print: private collection.

²⁹ Watercolour: private collection.



**Plate 8.67. Imperial Hotel,
London, mural panel painted by
Neatby, *Studio Yearbook* (1909).**



**Plate 8.68. Photograph of Neatby in his studio in Manresa Road, Chelsea,
showing the original painting of Plate 8.67. Private collection.**

including producing murals for the latter's country house, the main decorative scheme for which there is evidence is his series of mural paintings, illustrating the history of the British Navy, executed for the interior of the Imperial Hotel, London, which was completed in 1907. Several of these panels were illustrated in the *Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art* (1909),³⁰ including that shown here as Plate 8.67. The series apparently showed ships old and new and that shown in Plate 8.67 can be identified as the *George III*, from its appearance hanging over a balcony in Neatby's studio in Manresa Road, Chelsea, in the only discovered late photograph of the artist, shown in Plate 8.68. The photograph shows Neatby painting yet another ship in the Imperial Hotel series and at the top of the picture, on the balcony, part of a cartoon for the Harrods frieze can be observed.

Three-dimensional design.

Turning now to non-graphic decorative arts, Neatby's output encompassed a range of products including furniture, metalwork, jewellery, clock cases, and stained glass. Several examples of his metalwork designs can be seen in *The 1901 Book*, which show that he worked in silver, copper and brass, often decorating his metalwork with enamelling. Although he produced ornamental pieces such as bowls, candle sconces, candlesticks and trivets, some of his more important designs and those which set criteria for the identification of his work are his furniture mounts, in particular hinges. Several examples of this metalwork, largely replicating the images in *The 1901 Book* were published in the *Art Workers' Quarterly*,³¹ and illustrate his largely Arts

³⁰ *Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art* (London : Studio Publication, 1909), pp. 62-63.

³¹ *Art Workers' Quarterly*, i, No. 1 (1902), p. 27, pls. 7-8; *Art Workers' Quarterly*, ii, No. 5 (1903), p. 24.

and Crafts style, although even here his designs are sometimes given an English New Art character by the inclusion of curvi-linear motifs. Unfortunately, excluding those pieces published in contemporary journals, examples of his metalwork, like his jewellery seem almost non-existent and are not therefore dealt with in any detail here.

Neatby's furniture also seems extremely rare but is far better covered in reviews in contemporary literature. Vallance says of Neatby's furniture that 'it embodies the simplified essence of all true constructiveness and depends more on this quality and on its dignified proportions than on any supposititious attraction derived from outward embellishment'.³² Indeed, most of Neatby's furniture, largely comprising cabinets and tables, is very simple in design, relying upon clean lines and functionality for its attraction. Many of his pieces, like those shown in Plates 8.11 and 8.17-8.18, are quite unsophisticated designs which were often made of oak, sometimes stained in a variety of colours, and derivative of the Arts and Crafts furniture styles produced by larger commercial companies such as Liberty. However, Vallance goes on to say that Neatby did not actually disapprove of decoration being applied to furniture and was not averse to ornamenting his pieces with the occasional painted or inlaid panel, or small amounts of carving. This unostentatious use of painted panel decoration combined with simplicity of form is exemplified in the small cabinet illustrated in Plate 8.69. Vallance makes it clear that Neatby was the designer, and did not actually make pieces of furniture himself, but presumably painted panel decoration was executed by him.

³² Vallance, Aymer : 'Mr W.J. Neatby and His Work', *Studio*, xxix (1903), p. 116.

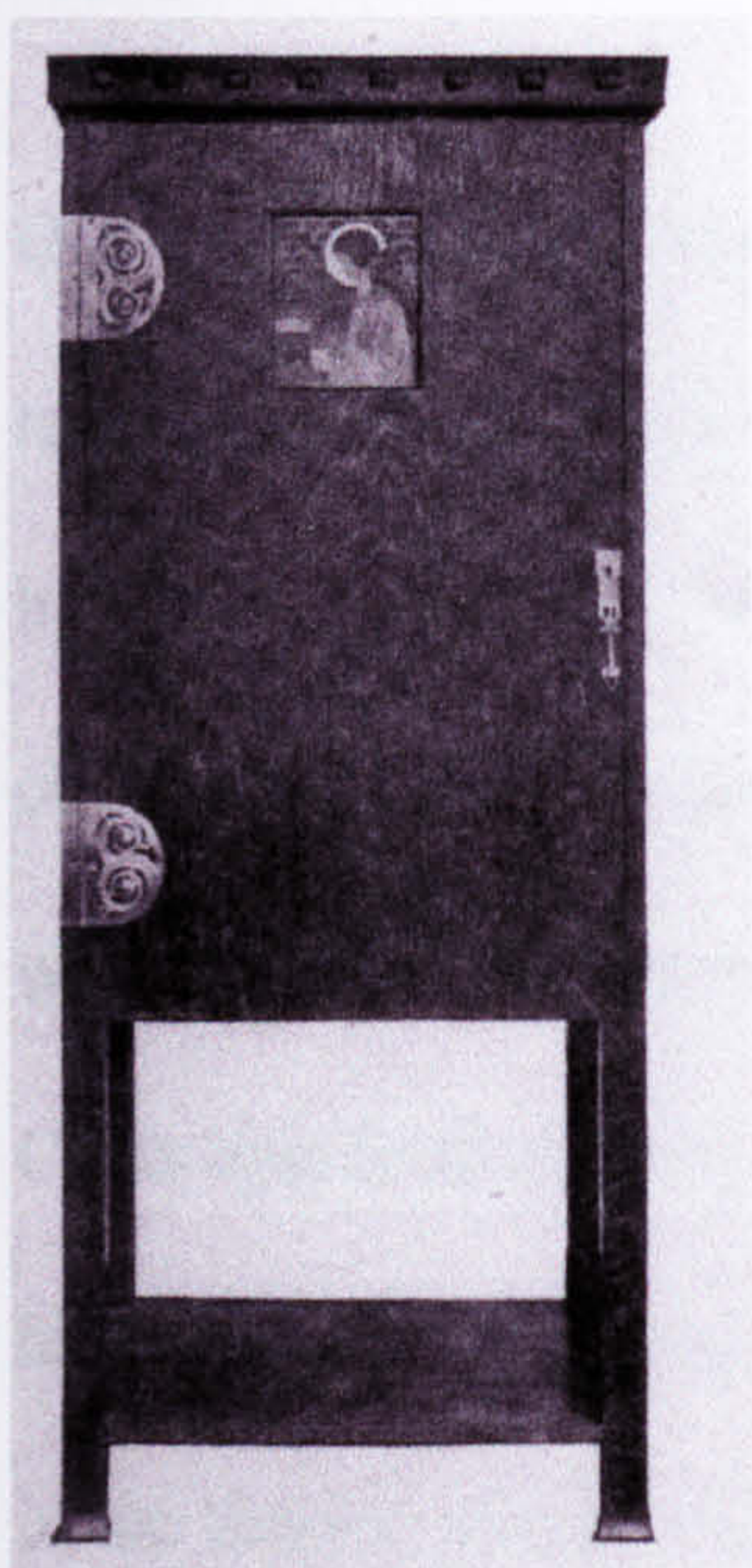


Plate 8.69. Music cabinet in green wax-polished oak with metal hinges and painted panel of St. Cecilia, *Studio* (1903).



Plate 8.70. Oak sideboard with characteristic metal hinges by Neatby. Private collection.



Plate 8.71. Original pencil and watercolour design for a sideboard by Neatby. Private collection.

Only two unrecorded designs for pieces of furniture that can definitely be ascribed to Neatby have been uncovered by this research, although several other pieces inspected were probably by his hand.³³ Of the two that are illustrated here as Plates 8.70-8.71,³⁴ the first is an oak sideboard owned by a member of the Neatby family but also, readily identifiable by its hinges, which can be referenced to those in *The 1901 Book*. This piece is typical of Neatby's Arts and Crafts style furniture, box-like in construction and relying for ornament on its rather flamboyant hinges and lines of carved oval motifs running along the horizontal and vertical leading edges of the timber. The piece is eminently functional with numerous shelves and cupboards and is surmounted by an exaggerated flat capping, like an attenuated Classical cornice, and sometimes known as a 'mortar-board capping'. Such cappings are common on furniture of the period and are found, for example, on pieces by C.R. Mackintosh and slightly earlier on works produced by the Century Guild in the 1880s.

The second piece of furniture (Plate 8.71) is very similar in design to the first, although in a green stained finish. The upper part of the design is virtually identical, structurally, with shelves placed to either side of a central cupboard, the whole topped by a 'mortar-board capping'. The only real difference appears to be in the decoration of the cupboard doors which here has a painted panel. Below, the central cupboard on the first sideboard is replaced by shelves and the

³³ Into this latter category must be placed the inlaid mahogany writing cabinet said to be designed by Neatby in 1903, that is illustrated in Cooper, Jeremy : *Victorian and Edwardian Furniture and Interiors* (London : Thames and Hudson, 1987), as Plate 597. This piece was not inspected by the present writer but seems rather sophisticated for a Neatby design.

³⁴ Both the sideboard and the original design in pencil and water colour are from the collection of a Neatby family member.

shelves replaced by cupboards but this is a minor change relating to the functionality of its spatial components. Certainly both pieces of furniture have brackets at the bottom, connecting vertical and horizontal members. The pencil and watercolour design for this second piece of furniture is intriguing. It is labelled: 'Dining Room - recess & sideboard', but there is no clue given as to where the scheme of decoration it was to apply to was located. The painted panel above the sideboard showing a mediaeval huntsman on a horse chasing wild boar with dogs looks very like the Norwich Union murals but modern photographs reveal nothing like this piece in the Luncheon Room and the brown floral decorated wall to either side of the recess clearly does not represent the wooden panelling of that room.

Two further pieces of furniture that seem worthy of note, if only because they are perhaps less well known than those seen in the showroom picture in Vallance's *Studio* article (1903), are a screen and an ottoman that Neatby and Evans exhibited at the Leeds Arts and Crafts Exhibition and reported on by Esther Wood in the *Studio* (1901). At this exhibition the partnership exhibited several pieces of furniture said to be among the most substantial pieces at the show. The music cabinet shown in Plate 8.69 was displayed along with two screens and an ottoman. The latter, shown here as Plate 8.72, displays an imaginative design for a basic wooden chest, creating an almost ecclesiastical feel to the piece, but the object most highly regarded by the reviewer was the screen shown here as Plate 8.73. This three-panel screen was made from peacock-blue coloured leather on a green-stained wooden frame, ornamented with blue and green enamels set in copper.³⁵ The frieze of galleons on this screen undoubtedly takes

³⁵ Wood, E. : 'The Leeds Arts and Crafts Exhibition', *Studio*, xxi (1901), pp. 253-258.

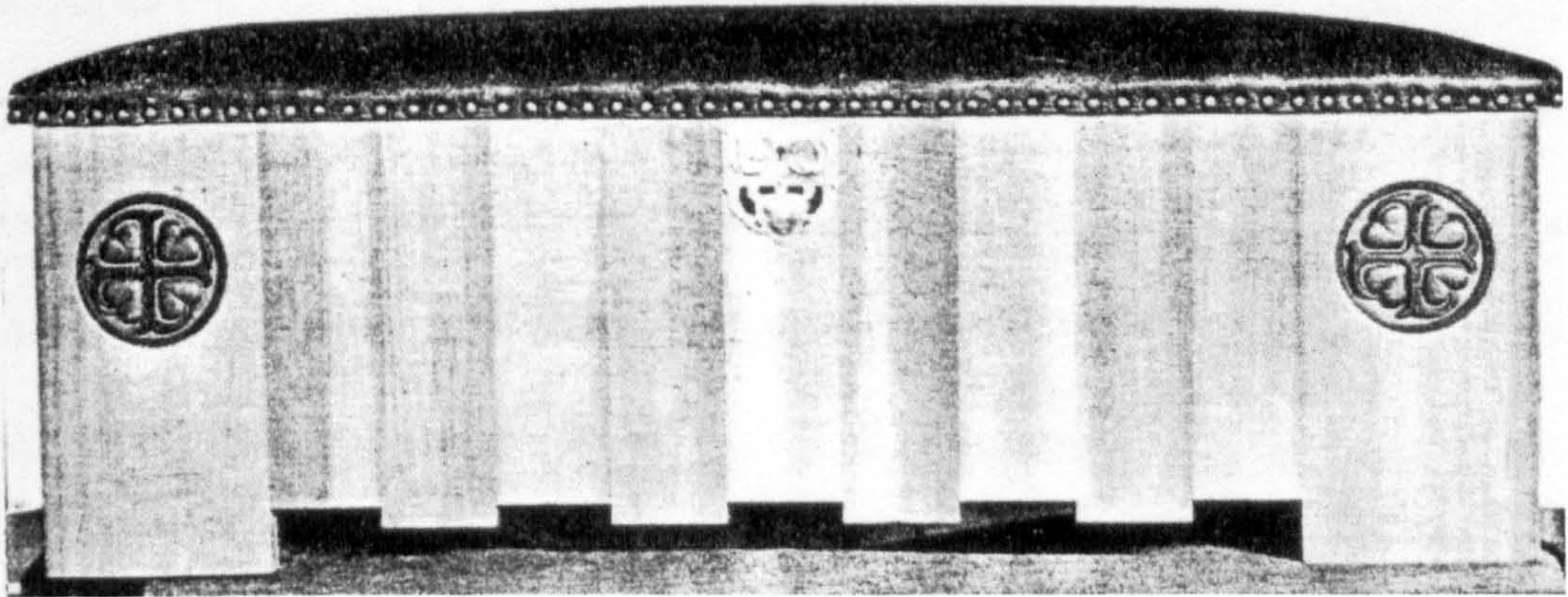


Plate 8.72. Ottoman in bass wood by Neatby and Evans, and shown at the Leeds Arts and Crafts Exhibition, taken from the *Studio* (1901).

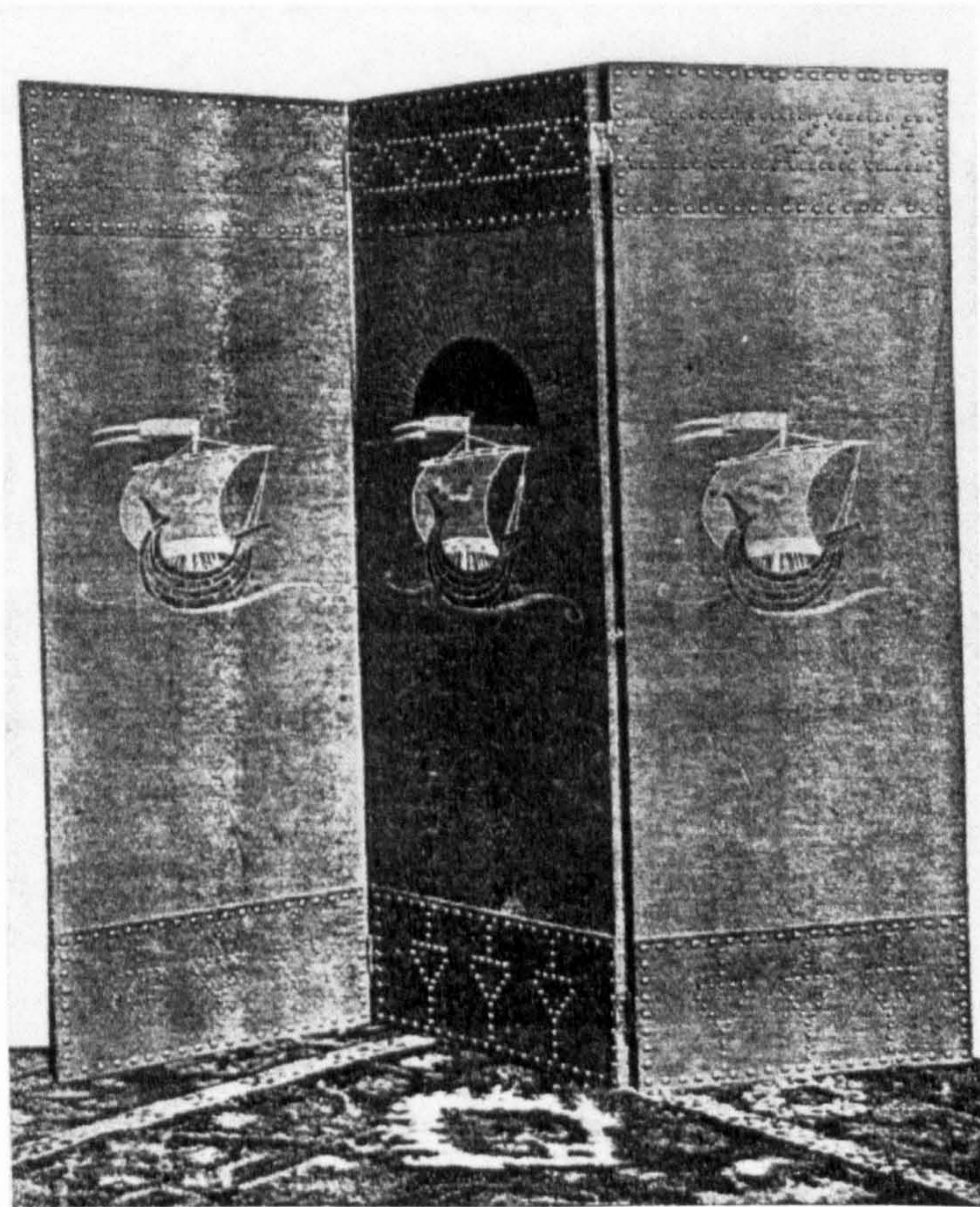


Plate 8.73. Screen by Neatby and Evans, shown at the Leeds Arts and Crafts Exhibition, taken from the *Studio* (1901).

its inspiration from his earlier friezes of galleons on the exterior of the New Palace Theatre, Plymouth. The motif was a popular one among Arts and Crafts practitioners and in addition to making a symbolic reference to craftsmanship, 'Such stylized galleons were also used ... by Arts and Crafts artists, as an emblem of intellectual discovery'.³⁶ Such sentiments must have seemed particularly apposite to Neatby in the early days of his new business venture.

Also falling into the category of furniture, another product that Neatby designed, and one for which he had plentiful previous experience, was the fireplace. Fireplaces, such as that shown in Plate 8.74, were made as early as 1901 and appear in Holme's book under Neatby's name as designer.³⁷ This particular example, made in bass-wood, stained dark blue, once again illustrates Neatby's attention to clean uninterrupted lines and simple form. The conception appears basic and yet ageless, with only the characteristic exaggerated cappings suggesting a *fin-de-siècle* origin. Other fireplaces were not so simple and allusions to a rural vernacular style were obscured by the introduction of English New Art elements of ornamentation. The fireplace illustrated in Plate 8.75, also from Holme's book, exemplifies this trend with the addition of a painted female figure decorating the upper part of the structure. Other motifs such as inverted hearts and groups of squares add to the contemporary character of the structure which itself aspires to a completely 'modern' shape. The whole is a rather uneasy marriage of Arts and Crafts copper work, New Art form and Neatby's own visual vocabulary of ornament.

³⁶ Crawford, A. : *C.R. Ashbee: Architect, Designer and Romantic Socialist* (New Haven and London : Yale University Press, 1985), p. 225.

³⁷ Holme, Charles (Ed.) : *Modern British Domestic Architecture and Decoration* (London : Studio Publication, 1901), p. 128.

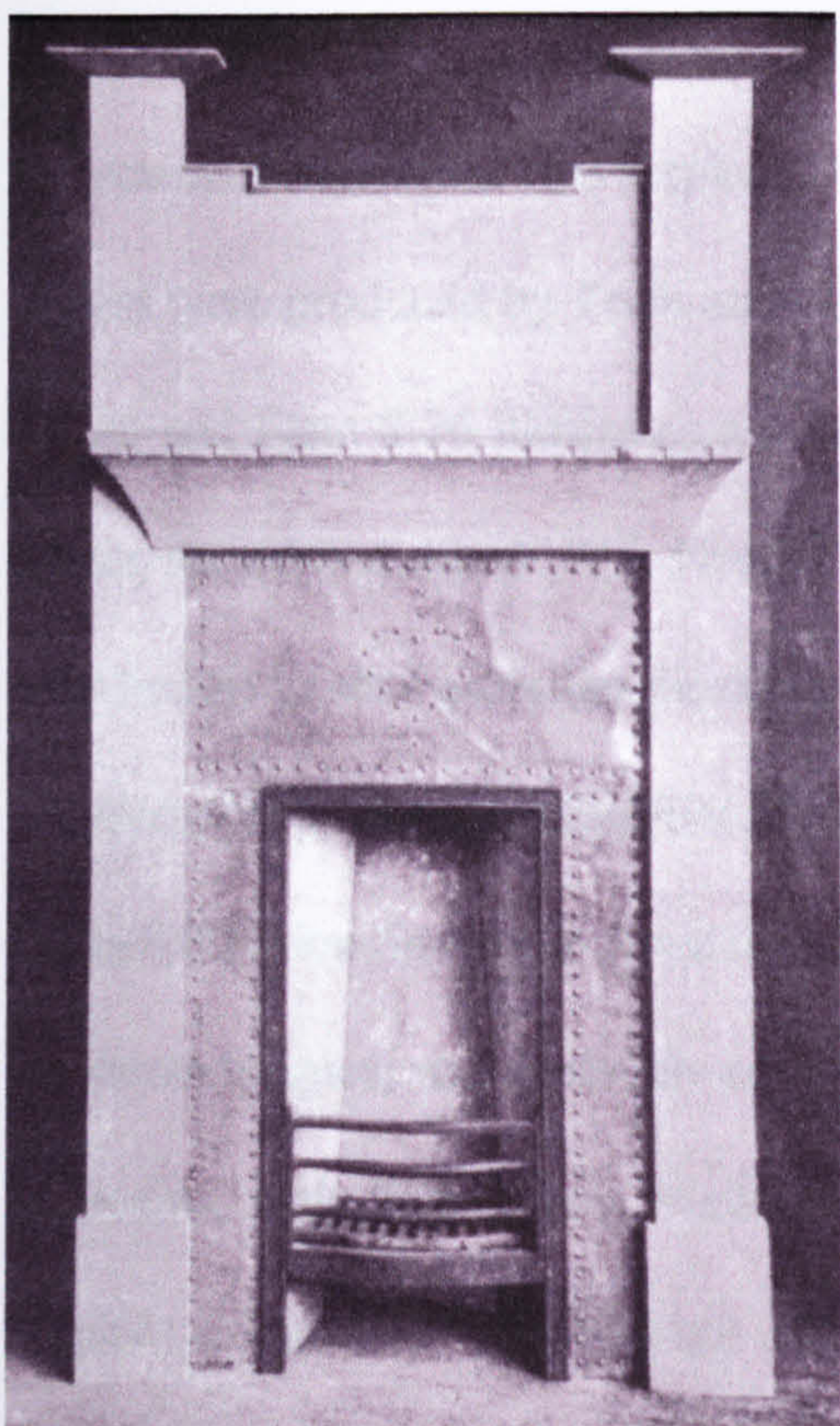


Plate 8.74. Chimneypiece in bass-wood, with brass surround to the grate, designed by Neatby, after Charles Holme (1901).

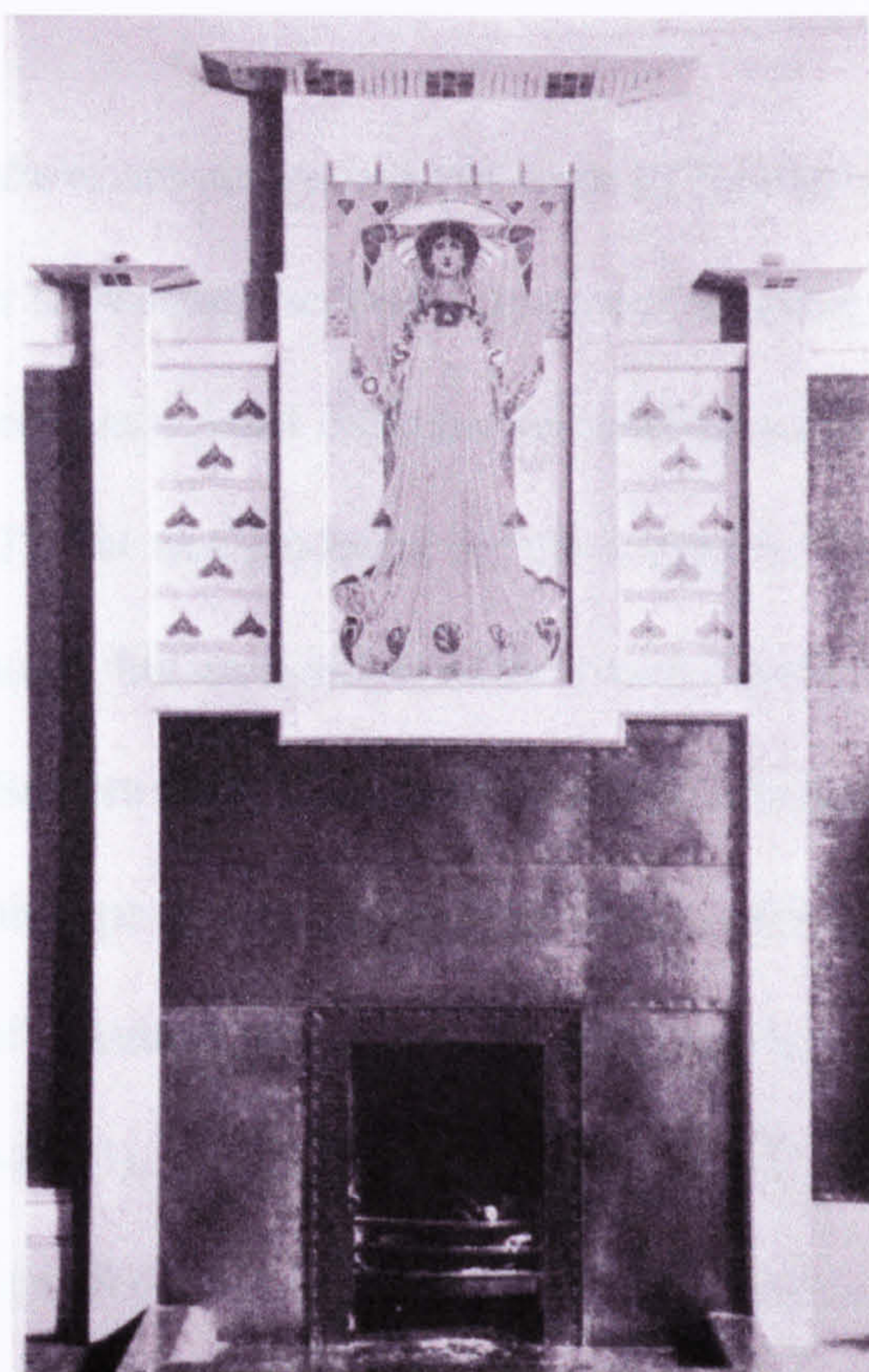


Plate 8.75. Chimneypiece with central panel executed in raised outlines in gold and platinum, designed by Neatby, after Charles Holme (1901).

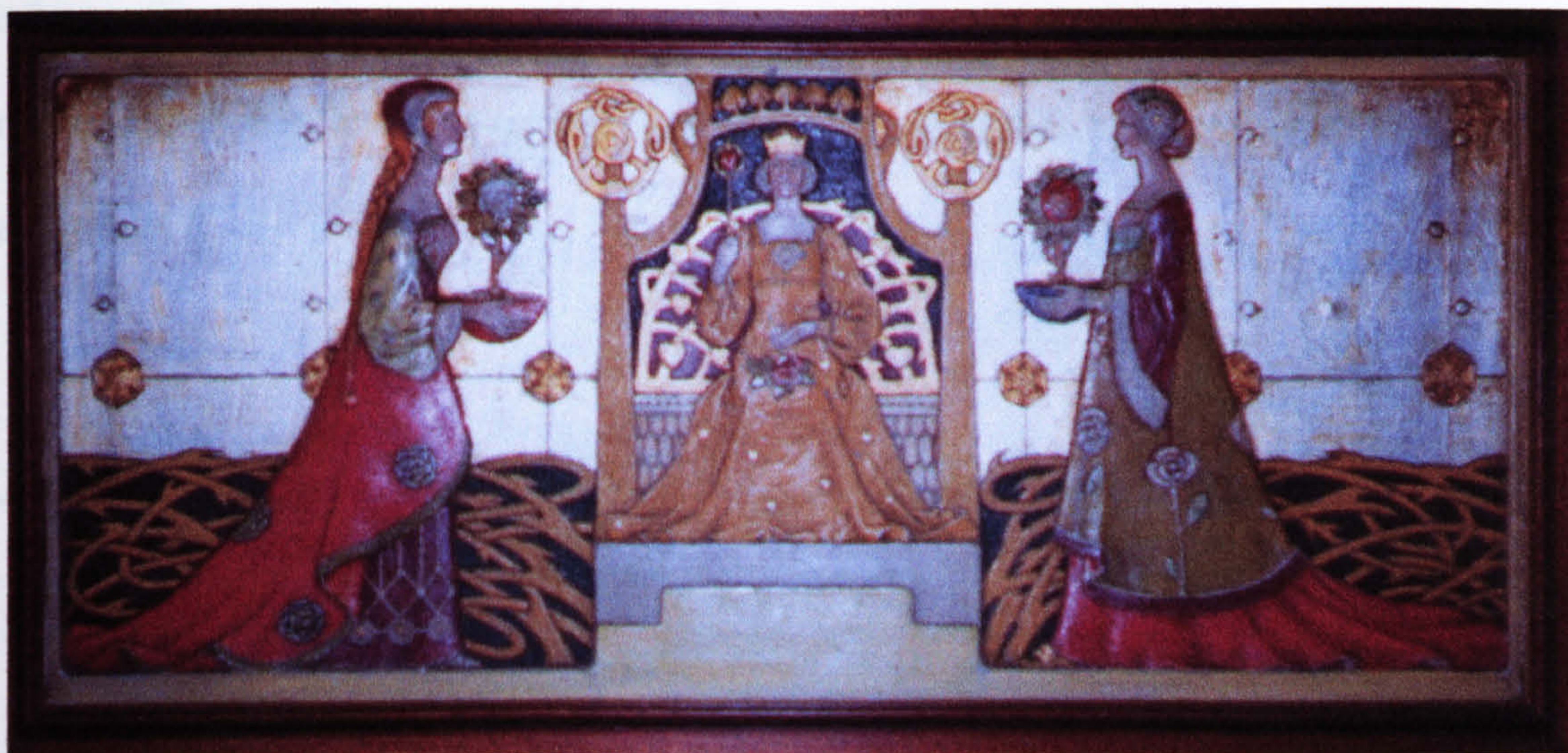


Plate 8.76. Overmantel panel in relief-moulded plaster, retailed by Teale and Somers, signed and dated 'W.J. Neatby, Mar. 1902'. Private collection.

The manufacturers of the two fireplaces discussed above are not known but some of Neatby's designs were produced by Teale and Somers, later to become the Teale Fireplace Company, Leeds, and Plate 8.76 illustrates a decorative overmantel panel executed in relief-moulded plaster, signed and dated 'W.J. Neatby, Mar. 1902', that was produced for the company.³⁸ It is not known in what quantities the design was produced, but an example of the panel, entitled: *The Heart of the Rose*, was exhibited by Teale and Somers at the 7th Exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in London in 1903.³⁹ This type of decoration, low-relief modelling on plaster plaques, was relatively common form of ornament at this period with a number of exponents, including Robert Anning Bell (1863-1933), producing examples for wall and fireplace decoration.⁴⁰ The design of the Neatby panel echoes his style for the Birmingham theatre mural and the Norwich Union series. It shows the Queen of Hearts being presented with a white rose and a red rose by two female attendants who walk across a bramble-strewn landscape. The scene is conceived in a mediaeval setting and its fairytale appearance negates any serious symbolic undercurrent that might be imparted by the thorn thicket in the background.⁴¹

³⁸ This example, from a private collection is now mounted in a modern wooden frame.

³⁹ 'The Arts and Crafts Exhibition at the New Gallery', *Art Workers Quarterly*, ii, No. 6 (1903), p. 76.

⁴⁰ For a discussion of Bell's work in this area see *Studio*, i (1893).

⁴¹ Several preliminary drawings for the figures on this panel can be found in the pages of one of Neatby's notebooks (Notebook No. 2).

Wallpapers

Like many other designers of his day, including Walter Crane, Lewis F. Day and C.A. Voysey, Neatby produced several designs for wallpapers, initially for Jeffrey and Co., from 1904-06, and subsequently, from 1906 onwards, for John Line and Sons. His designs received favourable comment in the trade press of the day and several have been published in recent works dealing with wallpaper design and manufacture.⁴² In terms of the identification of Neatby's designs, this is largely reliant upon reference to examples of patterns that were published during his lifetime and the matching of these to specimens held in museum collections, principally in the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester. Contemporary publications also assist in the dating of these designs but, for his designs for Jeffrey and Co., the chronology can be checked against dated design catalogues for the firm, known as 'block logs'.⁴³

Neatby appears to have produced two batches of designs for Jeffrey and Co., one dateable to 1904 and the other to 1906. The best known of these wallpapers is probably the *Lancelot* paper, shown in Plate 8.77, taken from a 1906 publication, where it is featured in conjunction with a *Sorrento* frieze, Plate 8.78.⁴⁴ Both designs occur in Jeffrey and Co.'s 1904 block log

⁴² For recent publications see: Oman, C. and Hamilton, G. : *Wallpapers - a history and illustrated catalogue of the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London : Sotheby Publications, 1982); Greysmith, B. : *Wallpaper* (London : Studio Vista, 1976).

⁴³ The block logs for Jeffrey and Co. are now held by Arthur Sanderson and Sons Ltd.

⁴⁴ Photograph of *Lancelot* paper taken from: *Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art* (London : Studio Publication, 1906), p. 113; *Sorrento* frieze from *Art Journal* (1905), p. 129. In the block logs there are listed respectively as designs No. 00838, and No. 001349.



Plate 8.78. The *Sorrento* frieze, designed by Neatby and manufactured by Jeffrey and Co., taken from the *Art Journal* (1905).

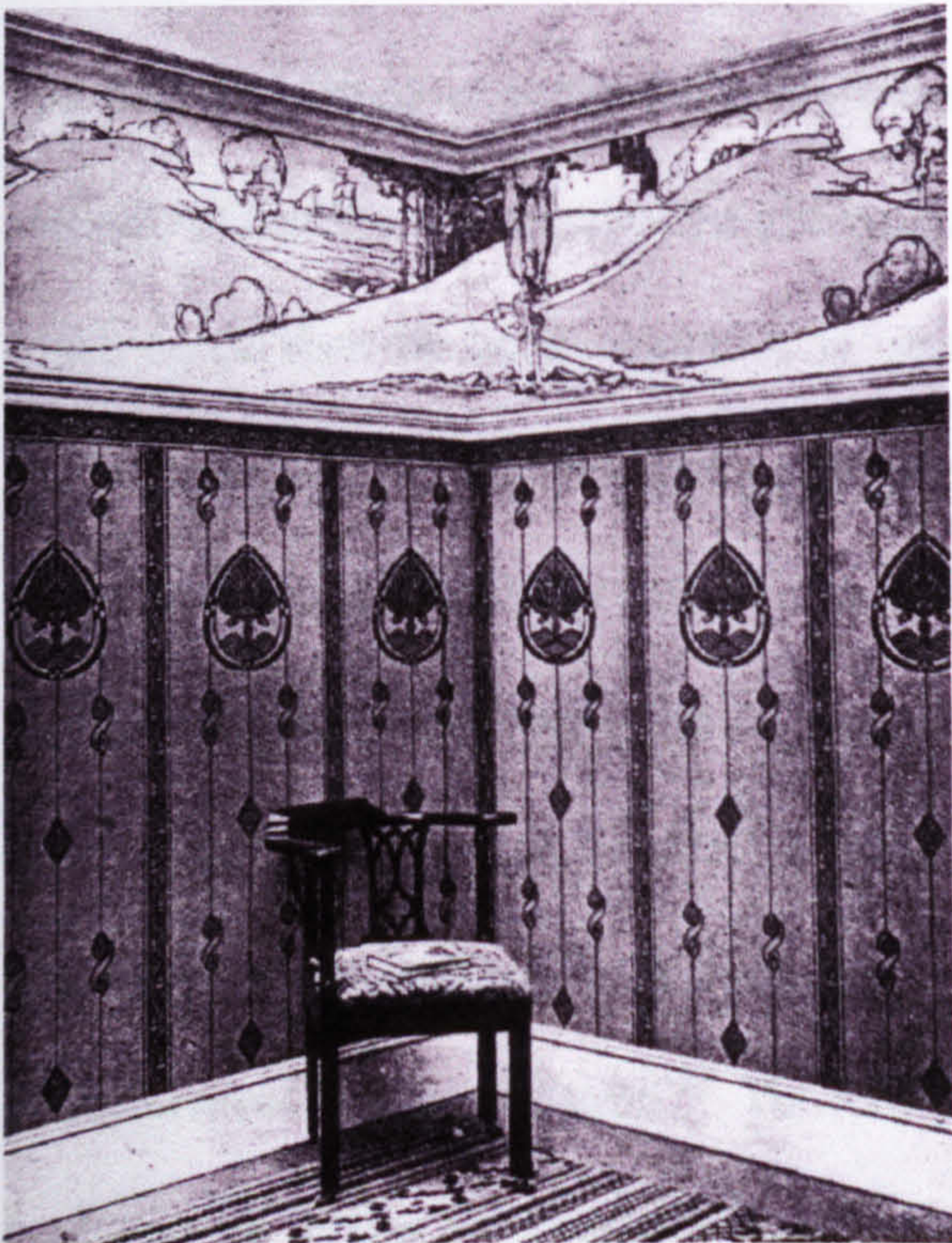


Plate 8.77. The *Lancelot* wall decoration, designed by Neatby and manufactured by Jeffrey and Co., taken from the *Studio Yearbook* (1906).



Plate 8.79. *Lancelot* wallpaper, designed by Neatby. Victoria and Albert Museum Collection.

where it is noted that the wooden blocks for the paper were cut by Ellingham, whose name appears to be associated with many of their products at this time. The *Lancelot*, sometimes referred to as the *Oak Tree Shield*, was produced in various colourways; that in the Jeffrey block log being predominantly turquoise with a pale blue outline on a white background while the example shown here as Plate 8.79 is mostly red and green against a white background. The design is very much in keeping with Neatby's work in other media at this time, being in a characteristically mediaeval idiom and utilizing stylized motifs such as the oak tree and the buds with their scrolling leaves.

The *Sorrento* frieze is particularly interesting in that it reflects both the spirit of artistic creativity of the time and the also the idiosyncrasy. The frieze was produced as a basic outline which could then be hand coloured, to suit the other colours of the decor, either by a professional artist or, one presumes, the purchaser of the wallpaper. Although both designs were clearly manufactured in 1904, they were launched in the Spring of 1905. In its review of the new season's wallpapers, the *Decorators' and Painters' Magazine*, March 15th 1905, commenting on new designs from Jeffrey and Co., said : 'The principal frieze they are bringing out this year is one designed by W.J. Neatby, called "The Sorrento". It is 26in. deep, 7ft. long before a repeat. And 6s. per yard'.⁴⁵ The following month, the same publication provided their readers with further information: 'Another of the most important of this year's landscape friezes is designed by Mr. W.J. Neatby and published by Messrs. Jeffrey and Co. It is called

⁴⁵ 'New Season's Wallpapers, 1905', *Decorators' and Painters' Magazine*, No. 47, vol. iv, March 15 (1905), pp. 348-350.

“The Sorrento” frieze. The hilly nature of the landscape well adapts it for the position it is designed to occupy, and there is enough variety in the composition, as well as in the long repeat, to prevent the weariness of repetition’.⁴⁶ Clearly, the *Sorrento* frieze received the approval of the reviewer.

Another Neatby wallpaper that appears to have been marketed at the same time as those above is the *Orchard*, which is shown here in Plates 8.80-8.81. This pattern, another of Neatby’s designs of 1904, which conforms to all the curvilinear tendencies of Art Nouveau received the following praise from the *Decorators’ and Painters’ Magazine*: ‘ “The Orchard” decoration (another design by W.J. Neatby) is a clever arrangement of curves and undulating lines. The orchard is in flower, and we hope the fruit will be what Mr. Dombey called a “very good thing - gold, silver and copper”, to reward both the artist and the manufacturer, and that demand for this taking design may keep the presses going merrily’.⁴⁷

The *Orchard* is stylistically very similar to the last of the 1904 designs considered here, the *Lancaster* frieze, illustrated here as Plate 8.82. Although the example shown here is coloured in tones of green with orange blooms and a pale brown elements, that in the Jeffrey block log has metallic silver-coloured leaves and that particular form of the wallpaper may well have

⁴⁶ Ramsey, H.L. : ‘The Frieze in Decoration’, *Decorators’ and Painters’ Magazine*, No. 48, vol. iv, April 15 (1905), pp. 380-382.

⁴⁷ ‘New Season’s Wallpapers, 1905’, *Decorators’ and Painters’ Magazine*, No. 47, vol. iv, March 15 (1905), pp. 348-350. In the Jeffrey block log the *Orchard* appears next to the *Lancelot*. The blocks for this design were also cut by Ellingham and the pattern is No. 00274.

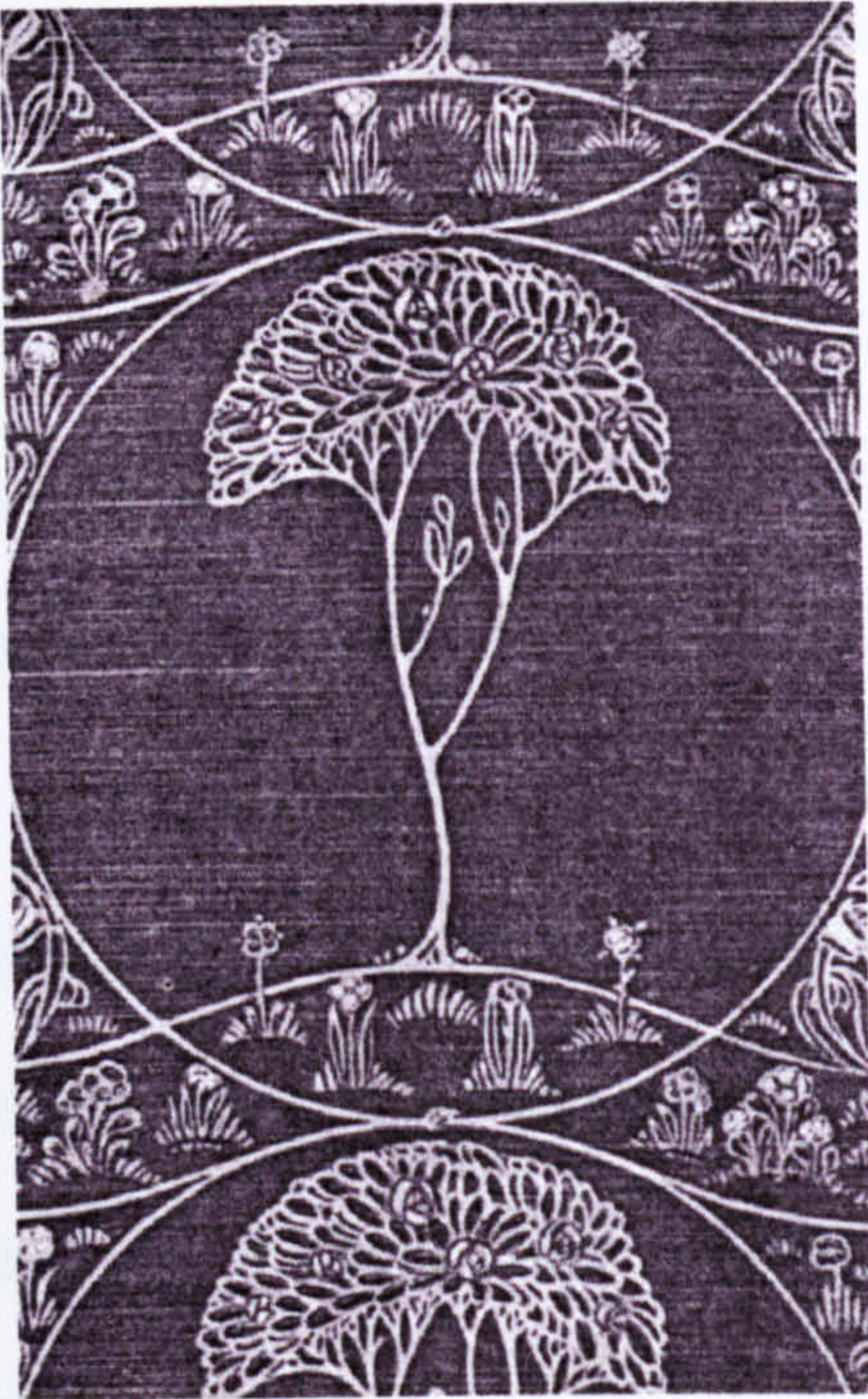


Plate 8.80. The *Orchard* wallpaper designed by Neatby for Jeffrey and Co., *Art Journal* (1905).

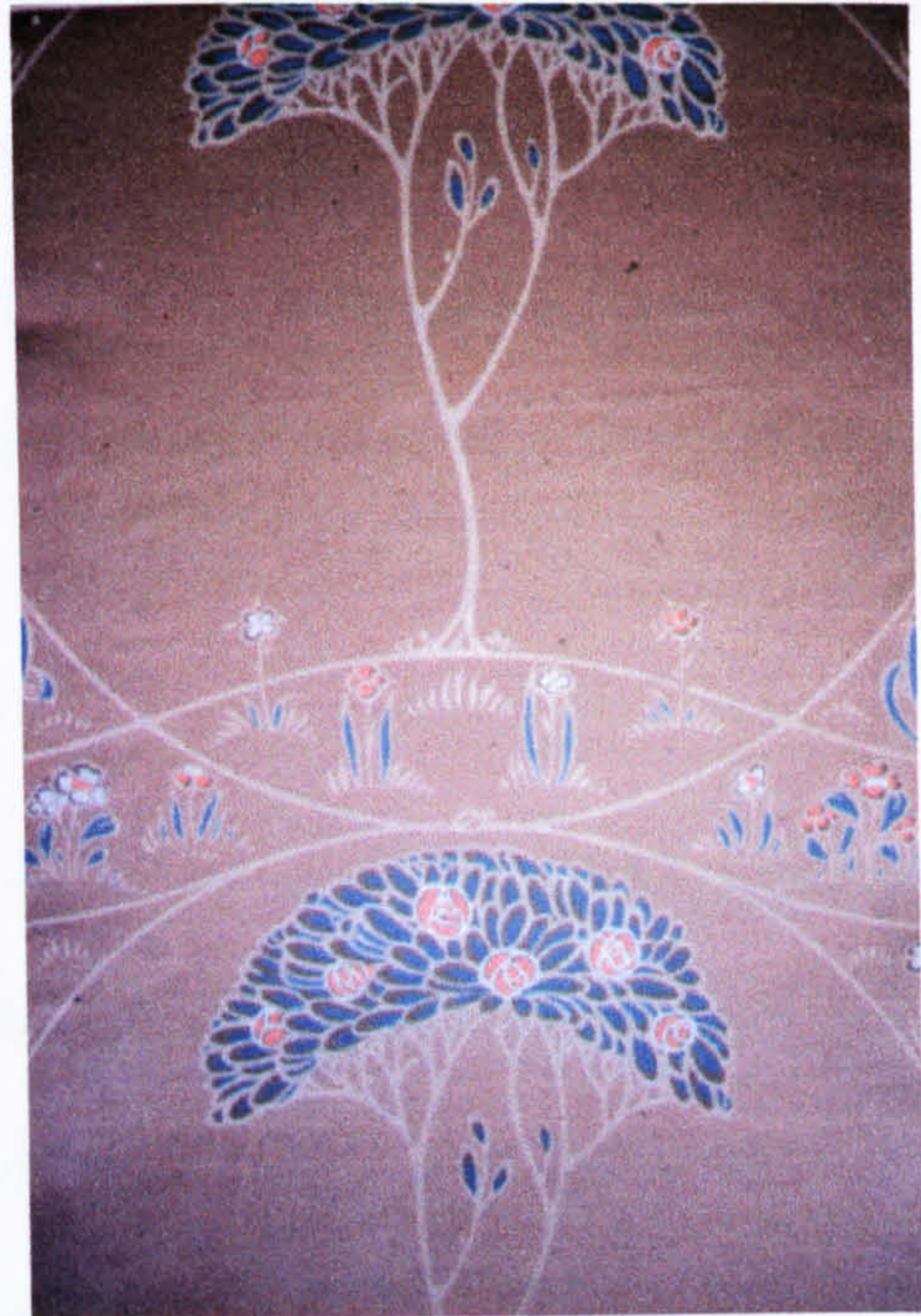


Plate 8.81. The *Orchard* wallpaper. Specimen from the Victoria and Albert Museum collection.

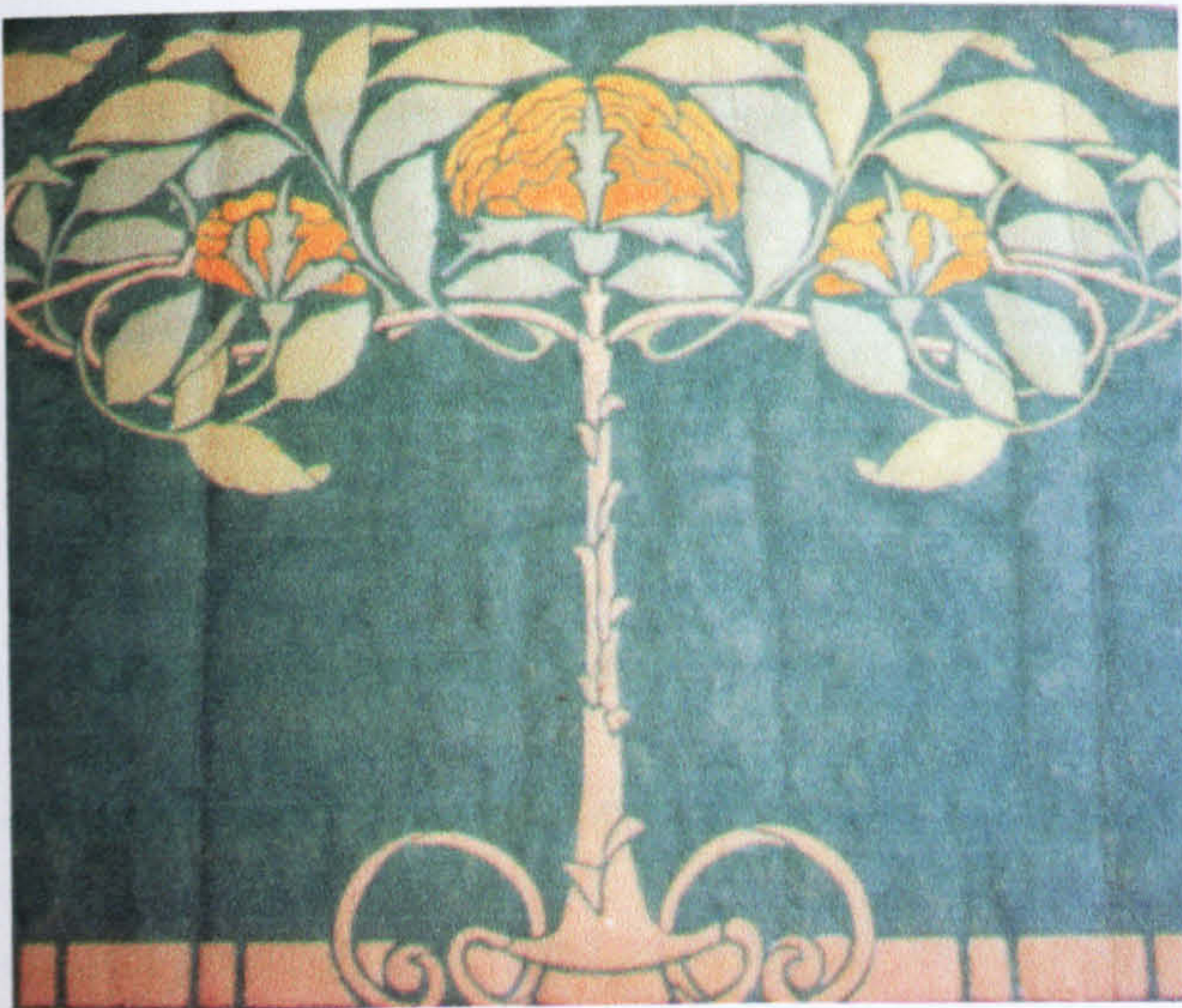


Plate 8.82. The *Lancaster* frieze, designed by Neatby for Jeffrey and Co. Victoria and Albert Museum collection.



Plate 8.83. *Hanover* wallpaper designed by Neatby for Jeffrey and Co. Victoria and Albert Museum collection.

inspired the quote from Dickens given above. Like the *Orchard*, this pattern is naturalistically inspired with sinuous curvi-linear branches and roots on a depiction of a tree of some exotic tropical derivation. Like the other designs mentioned above, it illustrates Neatby's adherence to current *avant-garde* graphic forms and confirms him as an important designer of English New Art wallpapers at this time.⁴⁸

Unfortunately, by 1906, Neatby's design the *Hanover*, shown here as Plate 8.83, appears rather bland and unimaginative when compared to his earlier works.⁴⁹ All the flamboyant forms of his 1904 designs have been replaced by an Edwardian formality, presumably as a result of commercial pressures in the market for wallpaper. It may be that Neatby was given less freedom, by Jeffrey and Co., to follow his own ideas at this time for it is in 1906 that he is to be found switching his allegiance to the rival wallpaper manufacturing firm of John Line and Sons of Tottenham Court Road, London.

Neatby's eventual admittance into the 'stable' of designers employed by John Line and Sons is hardly surprising. Their large showrooms on Tottenham Court Road were, quite literally, just around the corner from Neatby's own studios in Percy Street. One of the first references to his association with the firm occurs in the *Art Journal* for 1907, which published one of a series of wall paintings described as being from the entrance hall of the company's showrooms. The

⁴⁸ In the Jeffrey block log for 1904, the *Lancaster* frieze is listed as pattern No. 001317; it was cut by Ellingham.

⁴⁹ In the Jeffrey block log for 1906, the *Hanover* is listed as pattern No. 00971; it was cut by Ellingham.



Plate 8.84. John Line and Sons, part of mural scheme painted by Neatby for the Company showrooms, *Art Journal* (1907).



Plate 8.85. Advertisement taken from the *Studio* (1905).

print is reproduced here as Plate 8.84, and shows a portrait, in profile, of a young woman dressed in Renaissance-style costume within a lunette shaped panel. The panel, signed 'W.J. NEATBY, 1907', is divided into three sections with the central figural representation being bordered, to either side, with what appear to be fortified towns or villages in Tuscany. The general appearance of the composition has similarities with the works a number of Italian artists of the last decades of the 15th century, for example Domenico Ghirlandaio's (1449-94) portrait of *Giovanna Tornabuoni* (1488).⁵⁰ In this picture Ghirlandaio uses the same female profile format and similar exotic costume, painted in high detail. Whether or not Neatby ever saw a reproduction of this painting is open to question, likewise whether he saw any of Ghirlandaio's famous fresco cycle in the church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence (1486-90), where further women dressed in costume reminiscent of that employed by Neatby are portrayed. Whatever, his source material, this type of female profile, dressed in late 15th-century style Italianate costume, became a standard feature of his painting repertoire as can be seen in several works discussed below. Returning to John Line and Sons, presumably Neatby was commissioned to decorate the showrooms, but it is almost certain that he had designed wallpapers and other material for the company before this date.

In a review of the 'XIII Annual Exhibition, the Drill Hall, Leeds, in October 1906, the *Journal of Decorative Art and British Art Decorator*, commenting on Stand XVI, belonging to Messrs. John Dunn and Son, Newcastle-on-Tyne and Edinburgh, said of Dunn's exhibit that:

'It was designed by Mr. W.J. Neatby, and reveals a new idea which is

⁵⁰ Now in the Thyssen-Bornemann Collection, Lugano.

refreshing and helpful. Anything which comes from the brush of so accomplished an artist as Mr. Neatby is entitled to careful consideration, and the design shown on Stand XVI at Leeds revealed him at his best. In its broad idea and intention, and in the minutiae of the details, there was a complete sympathy and excellence that was charming.

The decoration is made in three lengths of 12 feet to the roll, and it is so drawn and printed that the final word as to its disposition rests with the decorator who can impart into his scheme a large amount of personality.

It has been designed to meet the demand for things Georgian.⁵¹

The last words of the quote may offer a partial reason for the demise of the English New Art style and suggest that the move from Jeffrey and Co. to John Line and Sons brought little change in the character of design opportunities. The description of Neatby's work above refers to a wallpaper which had, at intervals, a series of blank-centred printed ovals each forming a pendant to a decorative swag. The novelty, for which the design received the praise given, was that the ovals could be printed with uncoloured baskets of flowers that the decorator could then

⁵¹ Anon. : 'The XIII Annual Exhibition, Drill Hall, Leeds, October 9 to 15, 1906, *Journal of Decorative Art and British Art Decorator*, xxvi (1906), pp. 389-414. The quote above taken from p. 410.

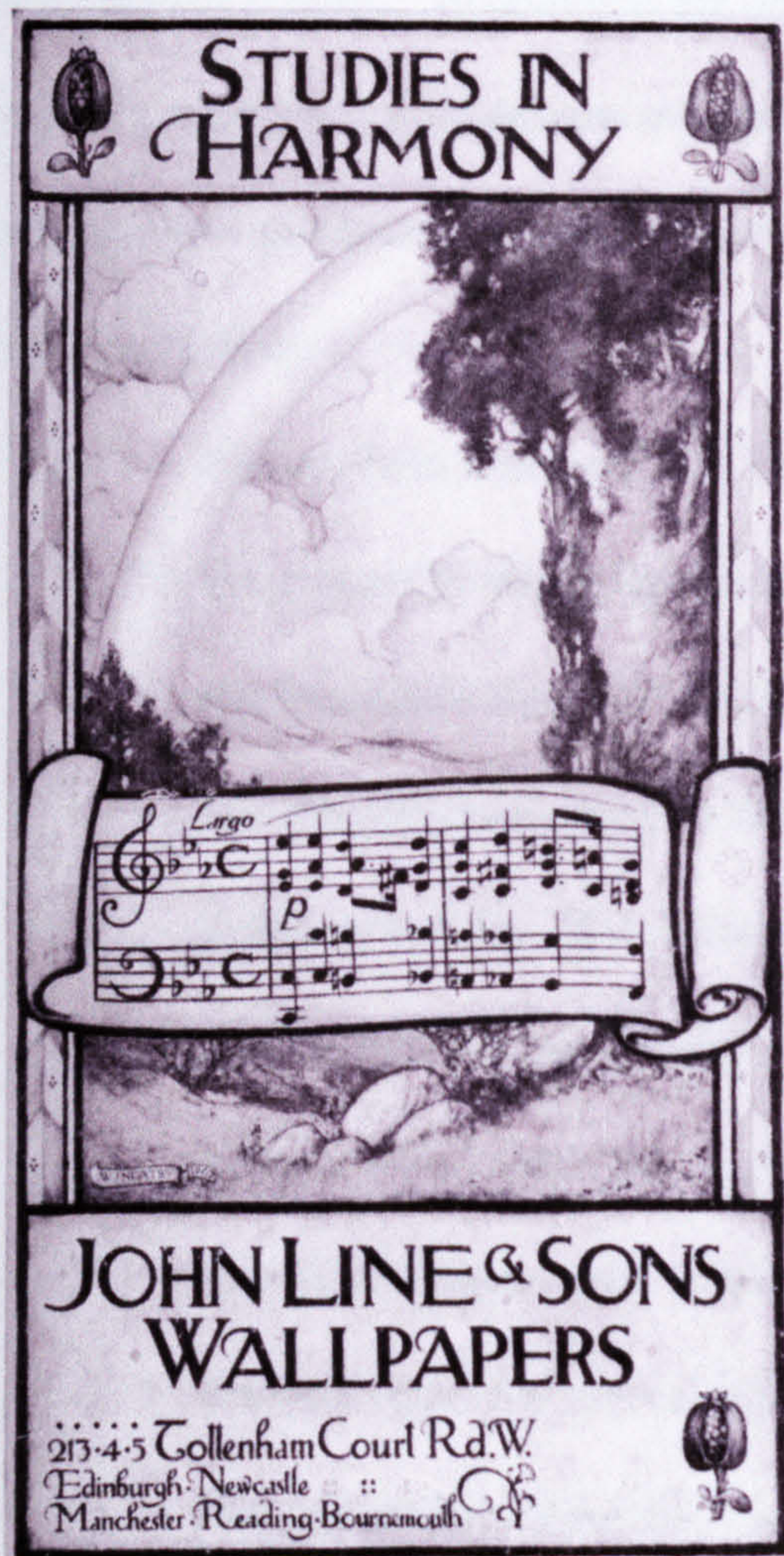
paint or, could be left completely blank so that the decorator could hand paint landscapes, floral decorations or portraits in the ovals. All of this was so that the decorator could have plenty of scope to exercise his personal talents. It was the concept of the *Sorrento* frieze in a new guise for a new company. The company was John Dunn and Son, but as the contemporary advertisement shown in Plate 8.85 reveals, towards the end of the text, Dunn's was part of the John Line Company.

The Franco-British Exhibition, London, 1908, provided an important showcase for Neatby's talents. In the official catalogue of the exhibition the entry for John Line and Sons - 'Artists, designers and paper stainers', names 'W.J. Neatby, Esq., R.M.S., Art Director'.⁵² Inside the front cover of the same publication, an advertisement designed by Neatby, shown here as Plate 8.86, drew attention to the firm's stand in the exhibition. The drawing for the advertisement, *Studies in Harmony*, appears to be the same one as that mentioned in Neatby's obituary as having been seen extensively on the London Underground.⁵³

Neatby designed the Line and Sons stand for the exhibition, producing a novel architectural scheme based on a central spacious hall, to which entry was gained through open columns, flanked by two wings devoted to the presentation of wall papers. The central hall contained

⁵² *Franco-British Exhibition, London, 1908, Official Catalogue* (London and Derby : Bemrose and Sons, 1908), p. 8.

⁵³ See Appendix B.



PLEASE REFER STAND N. 80 BUILDING 21 BRITISH DECORATIVE ART * FURNISHING SECTION

Plate 8.86. Advertisement designed by Neatby for John Line and Sons, taken from *Franco-British Exhibition, London, 1908, Official Catalogue* (1908).



Plate 8.87. Print of a wall mural by Neatby, exhibited at the Franco-British exhibition. Private collection.

wall murals by Neatby.⁵⁴ In commenting on his design for the stand the trade press said that it had '... been prepared from designs and under the direction of Mr. W.J. Neatby, whose artistic eminence is a guarantee of good results'.⁵⁵ In another publication, the stand received the following review:

Messrs. John Lines and Co. have made what is at least an interesting innovation in taking up the study of painted mural decoration, for which purpose they have engaged the services of a clever artist, who has already done work in this direction for various restaurants and public rooms, Mr. W.J. Neatby. Their well-designed exhibit contains two large landscape panels, two figure subjects: "My Love is like a red red rose," and "My Love is like a melody", painted in oil on canvas with raised gold ornament, and a lunette over the fireplace in the same style. The colour of these is pleasant, if a little bright, and the faces are pretty, with a soft Florentine feeling about the costumes and decoration. ... Mr. Neatby is not exactly a Gozzoli or a Carpaccio, but he is well meaning and a deserving artist, with a better sense of decoration than most of the men in his line of business, and, given proper conditions, could produce some interesting work'.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ 'Notes at the Franco-British Exhibition', *Journal of Decorative Art and British Art Decorator*, xxviii (1908), pp. 220-235.

⁵⁵ 'Franco-British Exhibition', *Journal of Decorative Art and British Art Decorator*, xxviii (1908), p. 159.

⁵⁶ Dumas, F.G. (Ed.) : *The Franco-British Exhibition Illustrated Review 1908* (London : Chatto and Windus, 1908), pp. 191-192.

The comments above indicate that Neatby was at the height career as an independent artist; his past work, decorating ‘restaurants and public rooms’, was obviously well known and his present achievements at the Exhibition were considered innovatory and more than competent, both in respect of his architectural and painting skills. Unfortunately, no illustrations of the Line and Sons stand have been discovered and the character of most of his paintings, other than as suggested by the information given above, remains unknown. However, the two figural murals shown at the Exhibition were considered worth reproducing as prints and one of them, entitled *My Love is like a red red rose, Just newly blown in June*, is reproduced here as Plate 8.87.⁵⁷ This painting made use of the same motifs of bundled leaves that Neatby had used as swags on his wallpaper designs yet in other respects the work is a complete departure from the rather two dimensional, somewhat wooden-looking figure-studies utilized in most of his previous mural work. Undoubtedly, at this stage of his life, Neatby was concentrating more on his painting than on any other form of creative work and his dedication to this area of expertise was beginning to show appreciable dividends. In fact the Franco-British Exhibition marks the last important recorded design work by Neatby. He may well have retained the position of Art Director at John Line and Sons until his death, but it seems that it was in the field of painting that he was to concentrate more of his time after 1908.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ During the course of research for this thesis, copies of this print were found in the collections of several Neatby family members, and in one instance a print of *My Love is like a melody*, produced in a similar format, was also discovered.

⁵⁸ To emphasize this point, in the British Art section of the Franco-British Exhibition Neatby exhibited his painting *The Chaplet* as entry No. 745; for details see Spielmann, Sir Isodore : *Souvenir of the Fine Art Section - Franco-British Exhibition 1908* (London : British Art Committee, 1908), p. 67.

Paintings and book illustrations.

Despite being a talented designer of furniture, terracotta and plaster mouldings, metalwork and fireplaces, Neatby showed his skills to their best advantage in two-dimensional or flat art. Whether this manifested itself in oil or watercolour painting or graphics, his best works are in this area. He seems to have always nurtured an aspiration to be a painter and, after his departure from full-time work at Doulton and Co., pursued this side of his career with increasing intensity, not only as a mural painter but also as a producer of miniatures and small watercolours and eventually as a book illustrator.

In the pursuit of his ambitions Neatby followed the traditional method of drawing attention to his works by entering them in public exhibitions. The venues he chose included: the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society show in 1906; the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, Autumn exhibitions; the Royal Academy; the Royal Society of Miniature Painters exhibitions; the Modern Gallery, London.⁵⁹

In terms of his personal contribution, the latter of these exhibitions was the largest that Neatby seems to have been involved in. From a surviving catalogue for this event, it can be seen that the exhibition, held in late 1905, at the Modern Gallery, New Bond Street, London, was a show displaying items of painting and sculpture by four artists: Mrs. Bernard M. Jenkin, Miss Mabel

⁵⁹ For a list of Neatby's entries at the Liverpool Autumn Exhibitions see Appendix C; see also Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society : *Catalogue of the Eighth Exhibition - 1906* (London : Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society and Chiswick Press, 1906), entry nos. 20, 66 and 571.

J. Young, Mr. W.J. Neatby and Mr. Reginald Waud.⁶⁰ In total some 122 works were exhibited, of which 60 were by Neatby. However, although he provided nearly half the exhibits, it must not be assumed that the show centred only on Neatby's work. In terms of professional artistic recognition his collaborators in this venture were of similar status in the fine art world: Mrs. Jenkin (*fl.* 1905-12), is listed as a Royal Academy exhibitor and showed her works at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; Miss Young (exhibited 1888-1908), exhibited her works at the Royal Academy, the Royal Society of Artists, Birmingham, and in Liverpool; and Mr. Waud (exhibited 1898-1917) similarly exhibited at the Royal Academy, the Royal Institute of Oil Painters and in Liverpool.⁶¹ Realistically, the four contributors were all aspiring artists who were never destined to reach the top of their chosen profession when judged in terms of widespread public recognition. However, there were many painters who earned a living at their level, and for Neatby, easel painting was only one sphere of activity and only one form of income. With reference to matters of commercial importance, notably the prices asked for Neatby's works at this exhibition, these are listed here, alongside the titles of the various pictures, in Appendix D. As can be observed, the cheapest of his paintings is priced at £2 and 2 shillings (or two guineas, the currency in which 'gentlemen' dealt), while the most expensive is £18 and 18 shillings, with a landscape panel decoration for an overmantel, which falls into a different category to the rest of the pictures, being priced at £31 and 10 shillings; the majority of the paintings are priced at under £10. No information is given as to the medium employed

⁶⁰ Anonymous : *An Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture by: Mrs. Bernard M. Jenkin (Margaret M. Giles); Miss Mabel J. Young; Mr. W.J. Neatby; Mr. Reginald Waud* (London : Modern Gallery, 1905).

⁶¹ Information on exhibition listings from: Johnson, J. and Greutzner, A. : *The Dictionary of British Artists 1880-1940* (Woodbridge : Antique Collectors' Club, 1980).

for these works but they may be presumed to have been watercolours, mostly on paper, but with some, and here the catalogue provides details, executed on vellum; these latter appear to be, in general, slightly more expensive. Unfortunately, no measurements are given for the paintings but those examples of his work that have been observed during the course of research for this thesis have been small, rarely exceeding 300mm. for the largest dimension. Some of the exhibits must have been larger, and this could account for the prices of the more expensive pictures, but most of his works were designed to be inexpensive and accessible to the buyer who perhaps did not have a desire to cover large expanses of wall with a single picture. In this, and by virtue of their subject matter, many of his works could be described as 'intimate'. In relation to payments made to other artists of the day, for example, the painter Luke Fildes was paid £3000 for his work *The Doctor* (1891) and other such leading names like Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema or William Holman Hunt could sell their works for four-figure sums, but this was usually for oil paintings rather than for watercolours, the latter medium normally achieving far less in terms of price.⁶² However, compared to the prices paid to the leading painters of the day Neatby's prices may seem rather low. However, few artists enjoyed the 'star' status given to painters such as Alma-Tadema, and it is perhaps relevant to recall that even an artist as well-known as Whistler was earning much less for his oils, with the celebrated *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* (1875), which was at the centre of the notorious Whistler v. Ruskin trial of 1878, being priced at only 200 guineas when it was exhibited at the Grosvenor

⁶² For a discussion on *The Doctor*, commissioned by Henry Tate for his collection of contemporary art, see: Treuherz, J. : *Hard Times, Social Realism in Victorian Art* (London : Lund Humphries, 1987), pp.86-89.

Gallery in 1877.⁶³ In reality, Neatby's prices were what might be expected for an artist of his status.

As relatively few paintings by Neatby are known visually, either from contemporary publications, museums collections, accessible private collections, or their recent appearance in commercial auctions, trying to identify individual pictures in the 1905 Modern Gallery exhibition presents a difficult task. Several titles appear that are known from subsequent exhibitions but Neatby may well have used the titles more than once and the paintings may not be the same in each case. For example, the painting *Romola* (catalogue entry No. 81) may not be the same picture, also entitled *Romola*, now in the collection of the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, but signed and dated 1906.⁶⁴ Equally, the *Dear Heart* (catalogue entry No. 66) is unlikely to be the same as a version of *Dear Heart*, shown below as Plate 8.94, that carries the inscription 'R.M.S.' indicating that it dates to 1907 onwards. Undoubtedly some pictures were exhibited on more than one occasion but to suggest which would be mere speculation. What can be commented upon from the titles given in the catalogue is that Neatby seems to have divided his interests between landscapes and romantic figure or portrait studies.

Despite their rarity, a few paintings by Neatby were uncovered during the course of research and several of these are reproduced here. They serve as a visual reference for his art and

⁶³ Dorment, R. and MacDonald, M. : *James McNeill Whistler* (London : Tate Gallery Publications, 1994), pp. 137-138.

⁶⁴ Walker Art Gallery Inventory: W.J Neatby, *Romola*, watercolour on vellum, size: 24 x 15.8 cm, signed and dated 1906, purchased 1913, No. 2195.

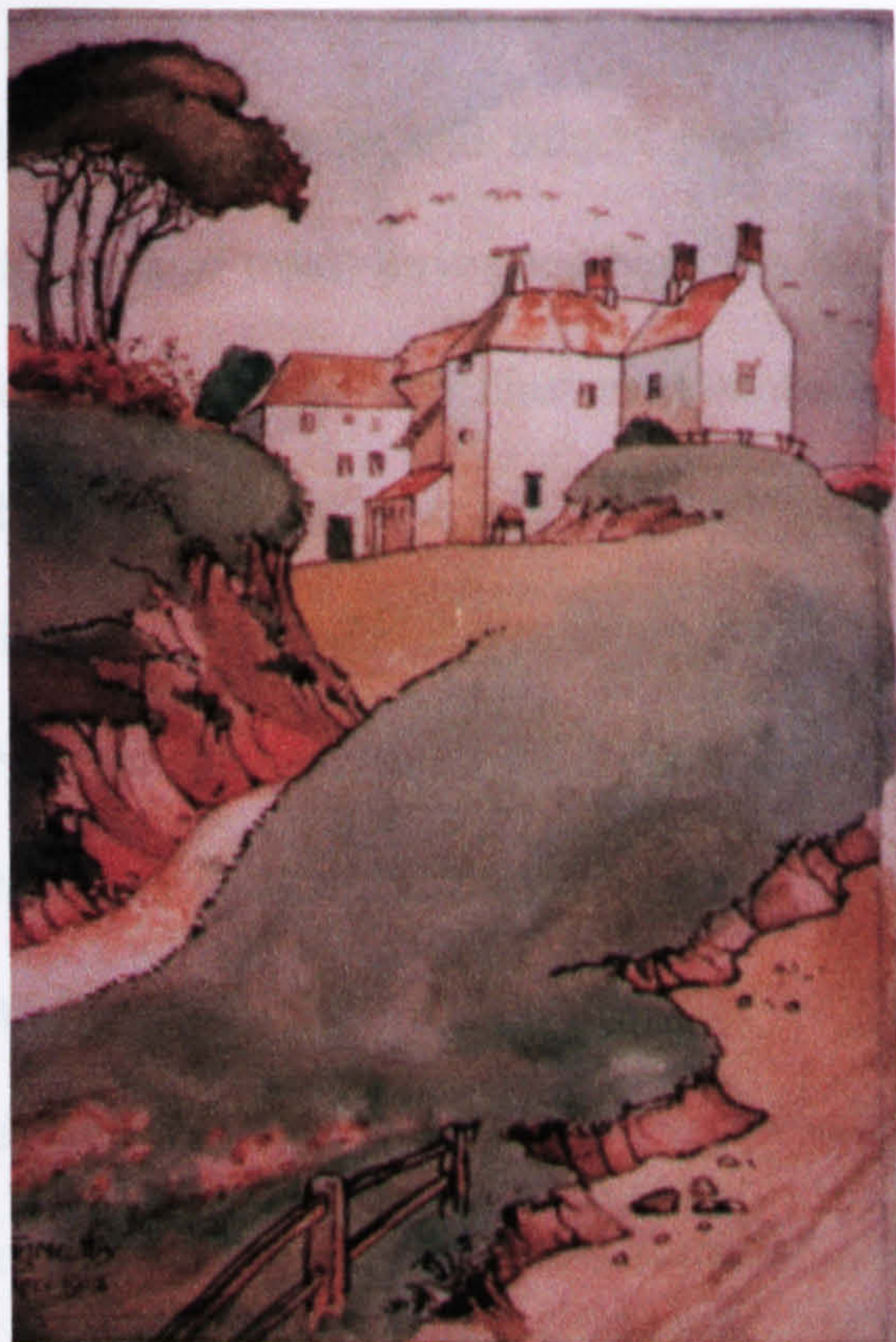


Plate 8.88. Landscape watercolour by Neatby, dated 1902. Private collection.



Plate 8.89. Landscape watercolour by Neatby, c.1906. Private collection.

illustrate his styles and subject matter. Although Neatby's notebooks contain numerous sketches of trees, leaves and branches, very few finished landscape paintings have come to light. Plates 8.88-8.89 illustrate two such paintings, both watercolours, the first signed and dated 1902 and the second signed, and, on the rear of the mount, inscribed 'Exhibited in Bond St., London, 1906'.⁶⁵ The paintings are both different in style yet both are characteristically by Neatby. The first, Plate 8.88, is executed in very graphic style with the main features delineated by heavy outlines. This style is somewhat reminiscent of Neatby's *Sorrento* frieze for Jeffrey and Co., and may well be connected with such work; equally, it is an ideal style for a large-scale mural, and may be a preliminary study for larger work. The second landscape is in more of a traditional watercolour style, making use of colour variation to suggest detail, although it still betrays Neatby's background as a graphic artist.

Neatby's main area of activity in painting seems to have been connected with the depiction of the female form, often in a portrait bust format, and frequently in a Renaissance setting. As has been commented on before, his subject matter seems inspired by Pre-Raphaelitism and has much in common with the late Romantic painters of his own day. The earliest dated work featured here is *Dolcibella*, signed and dated 1899. This picture, shown here as Plate 8.90, is executed in pencil and watercolour, heightened with gold and silver. Measuring 23.5 x 14.6cm., the painting depicts a young woman in profile with a *tazza* before her, in which a flame burns, sending a stream of smoke upwards to the top of the central pictorial area. Around

⁶⁵ The provenance of both these paintings is ownership by direct descent from Douglas Neatby, son of W.J. Neatby.



**Plate 8.90. *Dolcibella*, a watercolour by Neatby, dated 1899.
Photograph: courtesy of Christie's.**

this central area a stylized frame is painted in brown lines and wash. The style of the female figure has much in common with his designs for the tile decoration of the entrance hall to the Blackpool Winter Gardens (1896) and may well have made use of the same model. The subject is dealt with in a typically symbolist manner, mixing mystery with aesthetic beauty, sensuality with strong colours. The 'mock' frame is painted in an English New Art style with a mixture of curvilinear and geometrically disposed motifs, relating to both the stylization and the formalization of Nature. The work has the psychological qualities of his Zodiac figures painted on tile for the Royal Arcade, Norwich (1899), yet also, in the configuration of the top edge of the title panel suggests the exaggerated cornices that were to be so characteristic of much of his furniture. In this picture Neatby produces work that echoes the style of the Glasgow Four at this period, is completely up-to-date in stylistic terms and can be received in the public perception as Art Nouveau. When the picture came up for auction in 1996 it made £3,600.00 'on the hammer', a considerable price for a relatively unknown artist, although there was a precedent for this level of commercial interest as can be seen below.⁶⁶

The next painting considered here is also entitled *Dolci Bella*, shown here as Plate 8.91. This work, 50.8 x 30.5cm., signed and dated 1903, was painted on panel and mounted in a frame designed by Neatby. This picture is certainly the picture of the same name mentioned by Vallance when discussing Neatby's use of *gesso* in combination with decorative painting to accentuate embroidery and embossed ornaments, both of which can be observed in the

⁶⁶ *Fine Victorian Pictures, Drawings and Watercolours*, sale catalogue for 29th March (London : Christie's, 1996), Lot 66. Note: 'on the hammer' denotes the price before the addition of buyers premium.



Plate 8.91. *Dolcibella*, painting on panel, by Neatby, signed and dated 1903. Photograph: courtesy of Christie's.



Plate 8.92. *Dolcebella*, preliminary pencil sketch for the painting in Plate 8.91. Neatby Notebook No. 2.

picture.⁶⁷ The painting is of a very different nature to that previously discussed, despite being a portrait bust in profile; this work shows Neatby interpreting his subject matter in a more serious vein, as illustrated use of panel rather than paper or canvas and the 15th-century character of the piece. The format has none of the Art Nouveau characteristics of the earlier *Dolcibella* and is an exercise in 'serious' painting that is unfortunately rather rare in Neatby's otherwise commercial and rather fashionable repertoire. When auctioned in 1990, this picture made £5,800.00, hammer price.⁶⁸ A preliminary study for the painting occurs in one of Neatby's notebooks, illustrated here as Plate 8.92.⁶⁹ The final painting differs in detail from this study but the overall composition adheres to Neatby's earlier conception.

Other pictures that have come onto the market in recent years have been minor works compared to those above. In 1994 two works were auctioned by Christie's in London. The first, *Monna Rosa*, measuring 25 x 18cm., a watercolour on vellum, signed and dated 1905, made £1,700.00, and the second, *Redcap*, measuring 18 x 13cm., also a watercolour on vellum, signed and dated 1906, made £1,200.00.⁷⁰ Another watercolour based on a poem by Keats: *Isabella; or The Pot of Basil*, shown here as Plate 8.93, was auctioned at Sotheby's, London, in 1993. This small watercolour, measuring 16 x 13cm., initialed but not dated, made

⁶⁷ Vallance, Aymer : 'Mr W.J. Neatby and His Work', *Studio*, xxix (1903), p. 116.

⁶⁸ *Nineteenth Century Pictures and Continental Watercolours*, sale catalogue for 30th March (London : Christie's, 1990), Lot 514.

⁶⁹ Neatby's Notebook No. 2.

⁷⁰ Information from *Artquest*, the on-line service of *Art Sales Index* (London : annually).

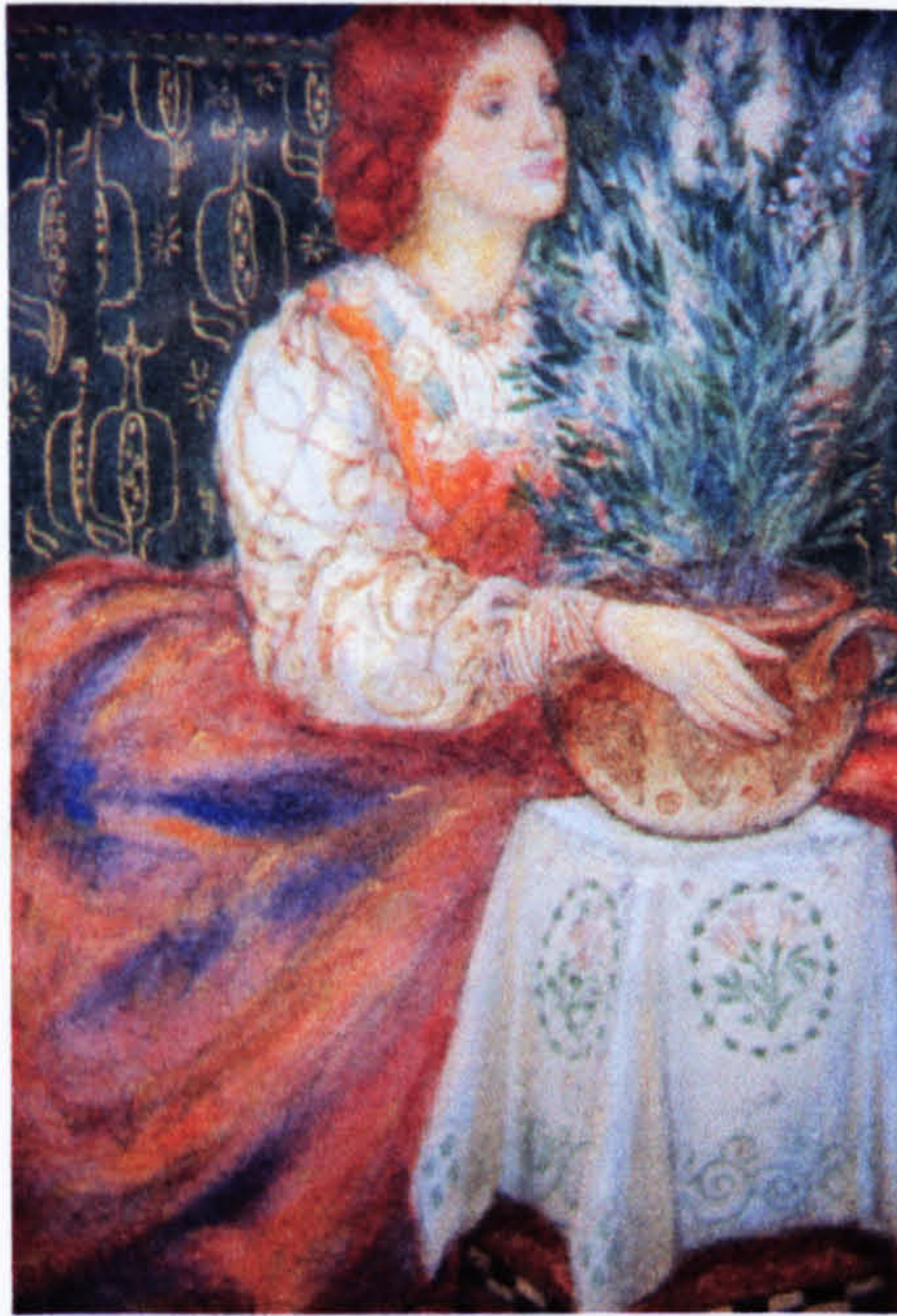


Plate 8.93. *Isabella*, a watercolour by Neatby. Private collection.

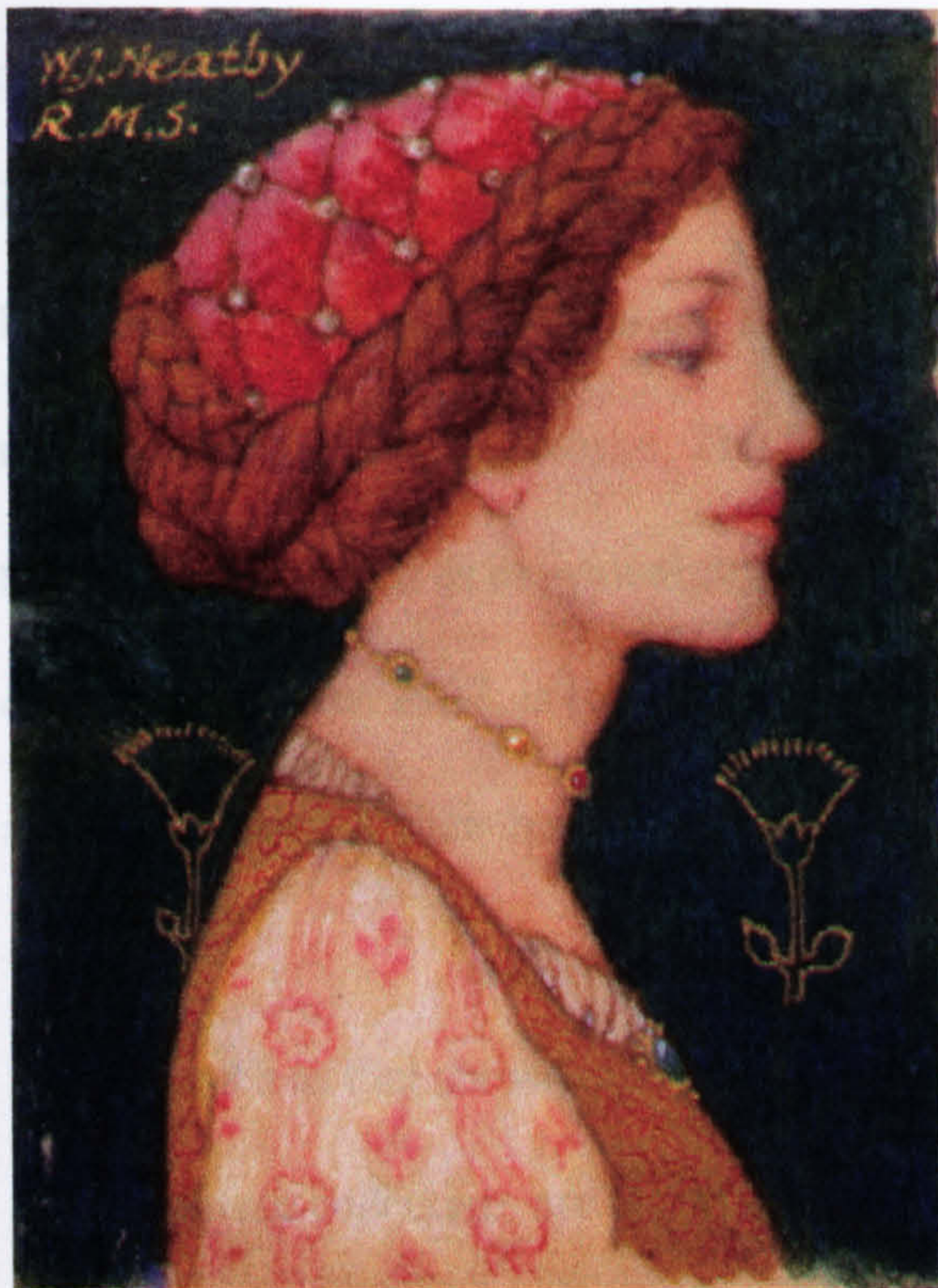


Plate 8.94. *Dear Heart*, a watercolour on vellum by Neatby (c.1907).

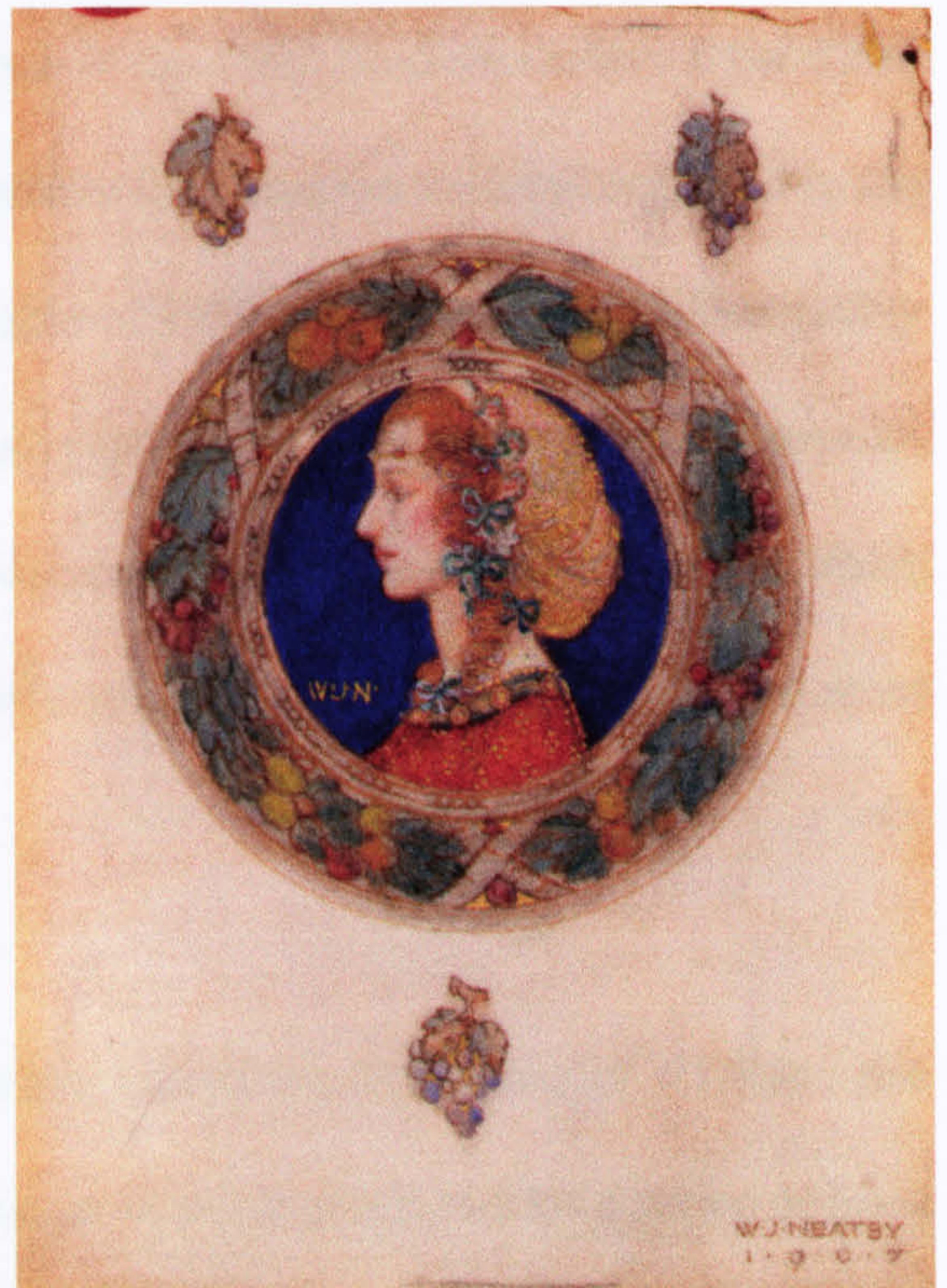


Plate 8.95. Watercolour on vellum by Neatby, dated 1907.

£580.00.⁷¹ The subject matter for the painting illustrates Neatby's continuing interest in Pre-Raphaelite themes and literary sources. The picture was used as book illustration in a publication on Keats, as discussed below. Technically, he once again makes use of slightly raised gold lines in the background patterning, in a composition that shows little spatial depth and relies on placing the main figure directly in the foreground to create a simple decorative arrangement that echoes the single-figure works of Albert Moore, and beyond his influence, Japanese prints.

A few minor works were discovered in private collections. One, is that shown in Plate 8.94, a small watercolour on vellum, measuring 7.3 x 5.3cm., and entitled *Dear Heart*. This is the picture discussed above as having the same title as one in the 1905 Modern Gallery Exhibition. This miniature, exquisitely painted in a style that emulates the attention to detail achieved in the Pre-Raphaelite works of Millais and Hunt in the middle of 19th century, has a jewel-like quality reminiscent of enamelled works. The flesh tones are particularly realistic and the hair appears to have been painted as individual strands. The picture contains the inscription 'R.M.S.' which dates it to or after 1907, is therefore late in Neatby's career; it shows his maturity as an artist and his abilities at their best.

Pictures such as that shown in Plate 8.95, a watercolour on vellum, measuring 18 x 13cm., also from a private collection, are typical in size and format to those produced for a series of book illustrations by Neatby painted in the latter years of his life. The painting, signed and dated

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

1907, follows a standard format for works of this type by Neatby, notably that of a portrait of a young woman, on this example set within a circular wreath, placed against a pale background, plain, except for occasional sprigs of foliage. Once again, the woman in the picture wears an elaborate head dress and the figure is rendered in minute detail. The format of these small pictures varies, for example there can be additional floral or fruit-laden swags, as can be seen on Plate 8.96, or the border to the portrait head can be rectangular like a picture frame. Essentially, these are no more than examples of commercial decorative art that probably owe their genesis to the hand-painted portrait and landscape plaques that Neatby devised for otherwise sparsely patterned wallpapers, as mentioned above. The portraits occasionally display a sense of mystery and intrigue but their very size and the purpose to which they were put, as book illustrations, militates against their being recognized as serious exercises in Symbolist painting. This latter comment is not an attempt to argue for a material size scale for 'great works of art', but recognizes the problems inherent in miniature paintings for the transmission of ideas from the artist to the viewer in a traditional exhibition environment. It could be suggested that using these works for book illustrations assisted in the dissemination of Neatby's artistic philosophy but it cannot be guaranteed that the customary flat-art consumer would be the same person who would read, in this instance, the book on poetry that the illustration featured in.

Sometime during or after 1906 (see below for a discussion on this dating) Neatby became involved with the publishers Hodder and Stoughton in a project to supply illustrations for a

series of books connected with the lives of famous poets, writers and musical composers. Neatby was not the only artist to be associated with this range of books and other contributors included E.W. Haslehurst (1866-1949), W.H. Margetson (1861-1940) and William Russell Flint (1880-1969). In any one volume the works of several artists could appear and only for one 'poet' book, that dedicated to the poet Shelley, did Neatby provide all the pictures.⁷² The series combined illustrations, usually five or six in number, with biographical details and extracts from the works of the various personalities featured in each volume. They were entitled: *Days with the Poets; Days with the Great Composers*, etc., with the name of the featured poet, artist or writer added to the title.⁷³ The series appears to have been aimed at the popular market, rather as an informal introduction to culture on a more detailed level. Although the individual volumes do not carry publication dates, the series, as a whole, appears to have been produced from about 1909 through to possibly as late as 1915. Certainly, the series was being marketed by 1910, as in a series volume on Shelley, in the possession of the present writer, there is the handwritten inscription: 'Edward Neatby, from his Mother, October 31st 1910'.

To consider this body of work in more detail, firstly, the date for the inauguration of the project, as far as Neatby was involved, has been chosen because of the appearance of the painting *My Last Duchess* in the series volume devoted to the poet Browning, accompanied

⁷² Byron, M. : *A Day with the Poet Percy Bysshe Shelley* (London : Hodder and Stoughton, c.1910).

⁷³ Neatby also provided illustrations for the volume on Schubert in the 'composers' series, see: Byron, M. : *A Day with Franz Schubert* (London : Hodder and Stoughton, c.1910-15). Illustrations from this book, which deal with themes from German literature are not illustrated here. Stylistically they are similar to Neatby's murals for Sennowe Park.



Plate 8.96. *My Last Duchess*, watercolour by Neatby, signed and dated 1905. Private collection.

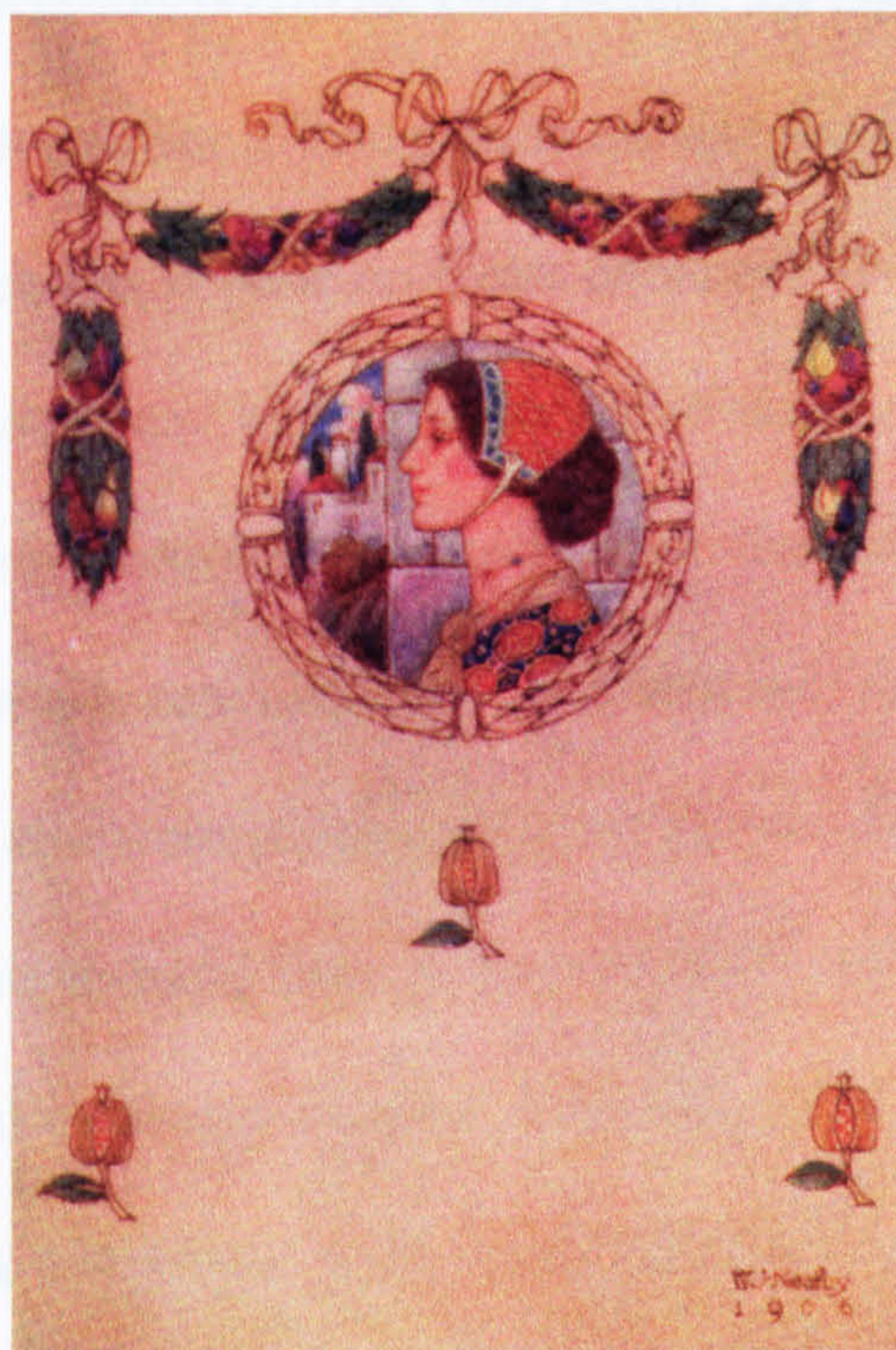


Plate 8.97. *My Last Duchess*, book illustration by Neatby, signed and dated 1906. Taken from Byron, M. : *A Day with the Poet Robert Browning* (c.1910).

by a poem of the same name.⁷⁴ This picture, shown as Plate 8.97, is signed and dated 1906, but is identical to the picture shown in Plate 8.96. This latter is a watercolour, from a private collection, which is signed and dated 1905. Of interest is the fact that Neatby obviously reproduced the same painting, but the motive for doing so could have been connected with a lucrative book contract, organized in 1906. However, it may be that, as suggested in Chapter 1 above, that earlier work was utilized for the project and that a date of 1909 is more reasonable for the commencement of the scheme. Certainly, in the same volume, on Browning, several illustrations by W. Russell Flint bear the date 1909.

Like the book dedicated to Browning, that on Robert Burns also only contained one illustration by Neatby, and that was a reproduction of his 1908 picture: *My Love is like a red red rose*, first shown at the Franco-British Exhibition, though included here without the caption at the bottom of the picture.⁷⁵ However, the volume on Keats contained five illustrations by Neatby, all accompanied by verses from poems by Keats which provided the subject matter and titles for the paintings. One of these *Isabella*, has already been illustrated above as Plate 8.93, and portrays the demented Isabella caressing the pot of basil in which she has placed the head of her beloved Lorenzo. The others are: *Autumn*; *The Nightingale*; *Endymion*; and *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, which are reproduced here as Plates 8.98-8.101. Of these, *Autumn* and *The Nightingale* are executed in Neatby's typical landscape mural style, ideally suited to book illustration and providing the viewer with accessible visual references to complement the

⁷⁴ Byron, M. : *A Day with the Poet Robert Browning* (London : Hodder and Stoughton, c.1910).

⁷⁵ Anon. : *A Day with the Poet Robert Burns* (London : Hodder and Stoughton, c.1910).



Plate 8.98. *Autumn*, book illustration by Neatby for Hodder and Stoughton's volume on Keats.



Plate 8.99. *The Nightingale*, book illustration by Neatby for Hodder and Stoughton's volume on Keats.

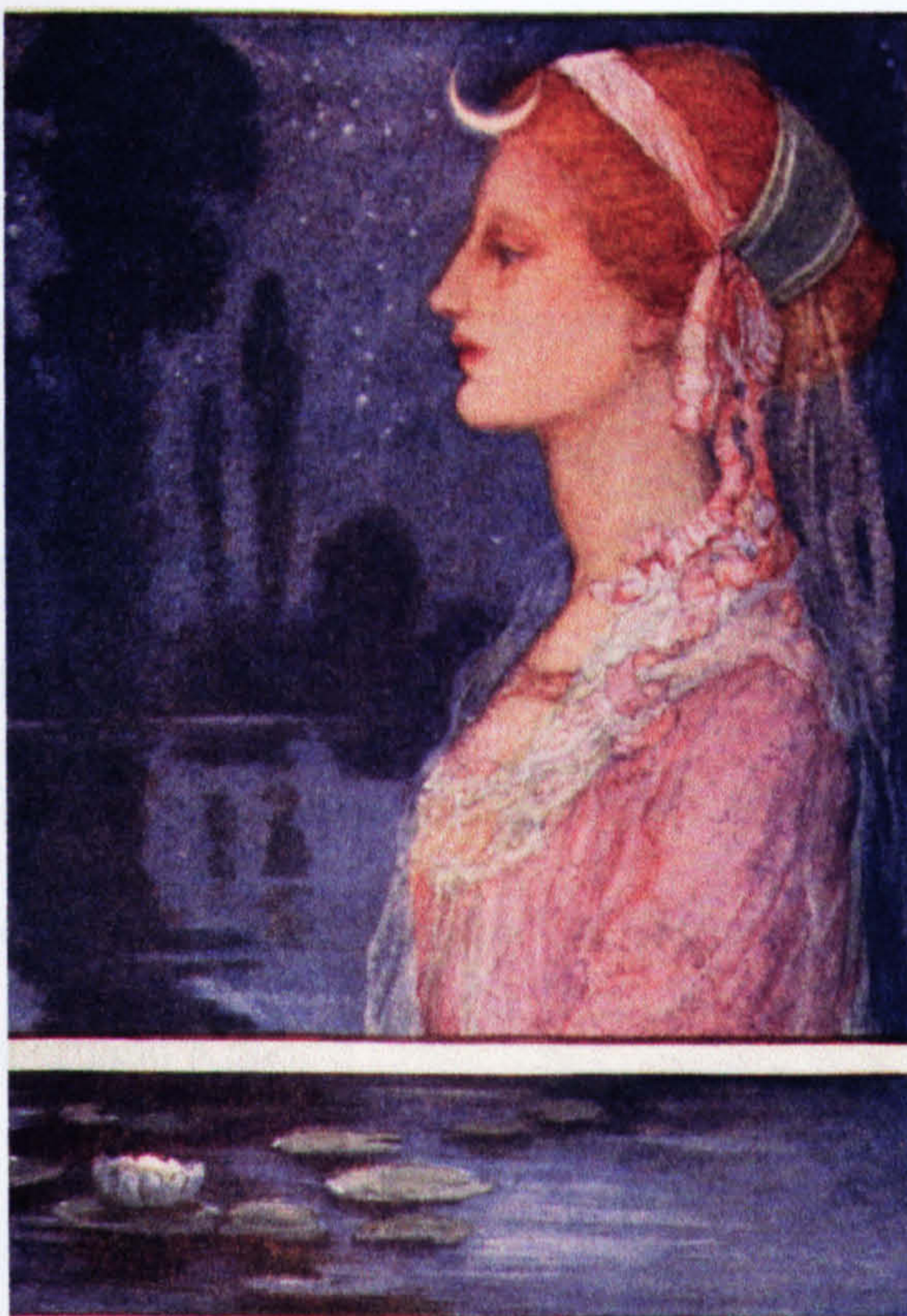


Plate 8.100. *Endymion*, book illustration by Neatby for Hodder and Stoughton's volume on Keats.



Plate 8.101. *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, book illustration by Neatby for Hodder and Stoughton's volume on Keats.

poetry. Their broad style with somewhat ambiguously defined forms reflects the type of landscape that might be conjured up by the imagination of the reader rather than suggesting an actual physical location. In contrast, the rather coy expression on the face of *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* fails to capture the mock-innocence yet seductive qualities of this dangerous creature, although the closely spaced trees, with their tortuously twisted branches, which form a backdrop to the picture do add an air of menace. The female figure is basically unconvincing and this fault betrays Neatby's lack of academic training. The painting *Endymion* is, however, an example of a painter confident with his subject matter and format. His portrayal of Cynthia, the Moon, and the object of affection for Endymion, the hero of the tale, encapsulates the first line of Keats's poem: 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever'.⁷⁶ The format of this picture, allows for greater content than the isolated portrait busts discussed above, and Neatby has produced a work that reflects the contemporary Symbolist painting of the day (although, as is considered above, whether his audience was aware of the fact is debatable). Utilizing his familiar skills as a romantic portrait painter Neatby has produced a vision of Cynthia as a timeless beauty set in a mysterious nocturnal fantasy landscape that reflects her nature. The predella panel at the bottom of the picture, with its dark impenetrable waters suggests the dangers inherent in Endymion's journey to the depths of the earth in pursuit of her. The painting has enigmatic qualities characteristic of the work of contemporary Symbolist artists such as the Belgian Fernand Khnopff (1858-1921) or the German, Franz von Stuck (1863-1928).⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Barnard, J. (Ed.) : *John Keats, Selected Poems* (London : Penguin, 1988), p. 27.

⁷⁷ For a recent publication including works by these two artists see: Rosenblum, R., Stevens, M., and Dumas, A. : *1900: Art at the Crossroads* (London : Royal Academy of Arts, 2000).



Plate 8.102. *The Cloud*, a book illustration by Neatby for Hodder and Stoughton's volume on Shelley.



Plate 8.103. *The Nereids*, a book illustration by Neatby for Hodder and Stoughton's volume on Shelley.

Perhaps the most interesting of these books, in terms of visual impact, is that dedicated to Shelley, which is illustrated throughout by Neatby. The images in this volume, inspired by the poetry of Shelley, and shown here as Plates 8.102-106, include the titles: *The Cloud*; *The Nereids*; *Ode to a Skylark*; *To Night*; and *Music*. All of the pictures are signed and three display the suffix 'R.M.S.'. The first of these pictures, *The Cloud*, Plate 8.102, is painted in the same ethereal style as his *Endymion* (see above), creating a visual synthesis out of Shelley's literary concepts. Once again the female figure, shown full-length, is anatomically unconvincing but the overall composition makes full use of tonal variations in colour and is strongly decorative. More interesting in terms of comparative references is *The Nereids*, Plate 8.103. This illustration to *Prometheus Unbound*, a work which has the idea of Man's liberation at its core and somewhat prefigures later Victorian male psychoses that identify Woman with undersea creatures, translates, almost identically, Neatby's terracotta bas-reliefs of mermaids (or nereids), at Plymouth and Leicester, into a flat-art format. The pose and form of the central figure in the group of nereids is so like that on the works mentioned, even down to the bubbles of air and the 'fin skirt', that the idea must have been resurrected from an earlier design for architectural ceramic work, although the date of the painting cannot be determined with certainty and may itself date to the 1890s.

The illustration shown in Plate 8.104, *Ode to a Skylark*, is similar in its relationship to Neatby's earlier architectural and three-dimensional design work. The main motif of the composition is one of Neatby's traditional romantic portrait busts, this time set within a rectangular



Plate 8.104. *Ode to a Skylark*, a book illustration by Neatby for Hodder and Stoughton's volume on Shelley.



Plate 8.105. *To Night*, a book illustration by Neatby for Hodder and Stoughton's volume on Shelley.

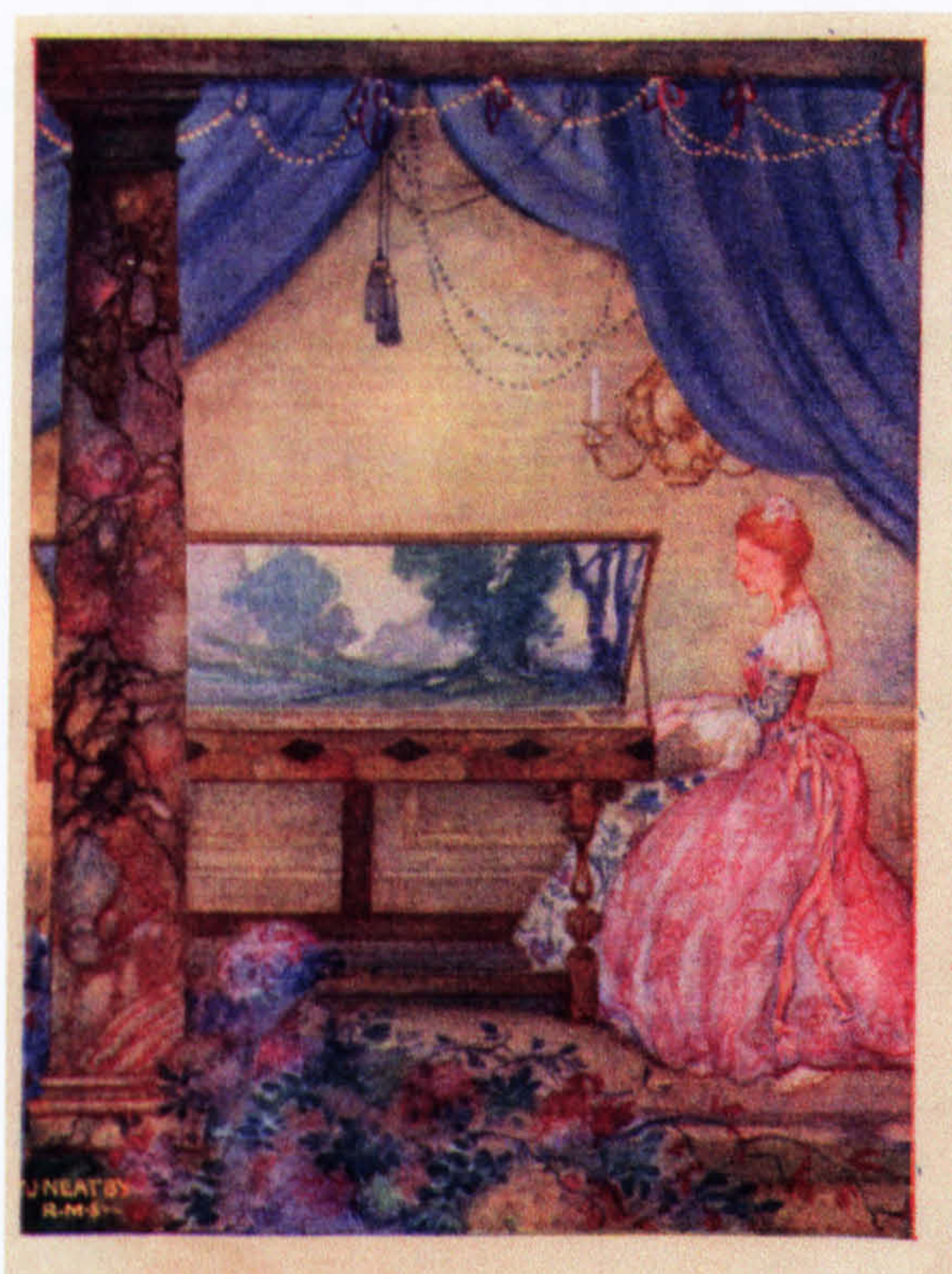


Plate 8.106. *Music*, a book illustration by Neatby for Hodder and Stoughton's volume on Shelley.

framework, the top of which recalls the exaggerated cornices found on some of his furniture. Fruit-laden swags frame the picture and the otherwise plain background is broken up by a pattern of skylarks flying in front of small clouds. The scroll work below the painted framework could be taken from a much earlier Burmantofts catalogue. However, very noticeable is the column that stands just in front of the woman's face; its zig-zag decoration appears to be borrowed from Neatby's Royal Arcade entrance in Norwich, designed a decade before.

The last two illustrations in the volume on Shelley are perhaps less interesting. *To Night*, Plate 8.105, is something of a nocturnal replica of *The Cloud*, partially successful in creating an atmosphere of mystery, yet lacking the warmth of the latter, due to its darker palette. Finally, Neatby has chosen a rather 'quaint' 18th-century interior as the visual setting for *Music*, shown as Plate 8.106. The rather asymmetrical composition with a floral arrangement breaking through the bottom of the frame and the technique of making the viewer feel that he or she is looking through a central void, almost like a keyhole, into the scene, illustrates Neatby's comprehension of Japanese spatial arrangement and visual illusion. It also illustrates the versatility of such techniques in accommodating varied subject matter. However, the capricious historicism of the picture rather overwhelms its more positive qualities.

Neatby's career as a painter was undoubtedly successful within certain parameters. Although he did not become a society portrait painter such as Millais or John Singer Sargent (1856-1925), he exhibited, on occasion, alongside well respected company, such as Walter Crane, and Henry Holiday (1839-1927), who were both exhibitors at the 1906 Arts and Crafts Exhibition

Society show. One must presume that Neatby had some commercial success at these various exhibitions as he continued to show his works in public and because his talents were eventually recognized by the publishers Hodder and Stoughton. Unfortunately, apart from extant works, little is known about his painting career. It would be interesting to know who his models were, but beyond suggesting the possibility of his second wife as a sitter, only one reference suggests his activity in this area; in one of his notebooks (Notebook No. 3) is the scribbled information: 'May Wright, 16 Tadema Rd., King's Rd. Firm figure, good bust, magnificent. Head 1/-, figure 1/6, day 7/-'. Whether or not Neatby used Miss Wright is unknown but he obviously considered her; she may have been the inspiration for the portrait heads, all executed at one shilling per session !

In considering his overall success as an independent artist and designer, the projects outlined above indicate that he was kept fully occupied during the last decade of his life and the receipts from this work and from individual sales of his designs must have created a healthy financial income. Another point to consider in relation to commissioned work is that it is unlikely that all of his work is included above and that several, if not many, other projects could be added to those listed here, if records allowed. The conclusion must follow that Neatby was ultimately 'successful in his independent career, particularly in his interior design schemes, including painted murals, but that even his smaller scale easel painting contributed to his artistic achievements and financial prosperity.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

‘What is called “The Art Movement” or other foolish names, nowadays, is supposed to represent the last word in modern art. The dreadful things which, from time to time, appear in the *Studio* and other publications of the highly eccentric school of modern eclecticism, and which appear to thrive best in Germany, will, we suppose, impress the imagination of the ignorant public. Meantime the really important qualities of design are being more and more cast into the shade, and students, in the hope of being thought clever and progressive, are inspired by professors and others to do their worst !’

(*British Architect*, 1902).¹

The sentiments expressed by an unknown correspondent in the *British Architect* were not unusual in the art and architectural press at the end of the Victorian period and during the following few years. Implicit in the quote is that damage was being inflicted upon the concept and practice of design in Britain by foreigners, notably the Germans, and somewhat mischievous academics, who, in emulation of Socrates, were responsible for the artistic corruption of the minds of their students. Xenophobia of this type is hardly unknown in British

¹ *British Architect*, 57, January 17th (1902), p.39.

art, for example Augustus Leopold Egg's triptych *Past and Present*, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1858, makes two very prominent anti-French references for the breakdown of the family unit, which forms the subject of the series of paintings.² Considering the architectural extravagances of French designers such as Hector Guimard, whose entrance structures for the Paris underground railway system will have been well known by the time the quote above was written, it is surprising that the correspondent has chosen the Germans as the focus for his criticism, but other than that, the sentiment is typical. The anti-intellectual stance also reflects the current mood in the design community which associated intellectuality with the Aesthetic Movement and more particularly with the recently denounced Oscar Wilde, whose trial and conviction in 1895, for homosexual offences, effectively severed much of British *avant-garde* art and design from the European mainstream, in the years around the turn-of-the-century. The disruption was not total but made a considerable impact on a psychological level. When Yeats wrote of subsequent events: '... in 1900 everybody got down off his stilts; henceforth nobody drank absinthe with his black coffee; nobody went mad; nobody committed suicide; nobody joined the Catholic Church; or if they did I have forgotten', he was revealing the rejection by an entire generation of the intellectual aestheticism of Wilde and his associates; the day of the dandy was over, his position taken by the dour, eminently practical craftsman.³

² For a discussion of this work see Nunn, P.G. : *Problem Pictures: Women and Men in Victorian Painting* (Aldershot : Scholar Press, 1995), pp. 56-59; and Wood, C.: *Victorian Panorama. Paintings of Victorian Life* (London : Faber, 1976), pp. 140-141. In this work, the ultimate destruction of the family is brought about by the adultery of the mother, leaving the Victorian husband no choice but to evict her from the family home. In the first painting of the three, a novel by Balzac is shown as a probable contributing cause for the wife's infidelity, while in the third work a poster, advertizing excursions to Paris, reinforces the idea that morally corrupt French popular culture is to blame for her downfall.

³ Yeats, W.B. (Ed.) : 'Introduction', *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1936), pp. xi-xii.

This was the legacy of William Morris, acquired in part from Ruskin, and his insistence upon practical skills and the nobility of labour, ideas which held sway among the members of the Art Workers Guild and with many of those who entered their manufactures in Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society shows. In general, the Art Workers Guild was against that which was theoretical, and potentially elitist, rather than practical and, in the 1890s, even fought to prevent the introduction of formal registration for architects in case it should divide the essential unity of the arts.⁴

In such a climate Neatby stands out as one of the few prominent designers of his day who actively injected Continental Art Nouveau elements into his work without openly criticizing the style. Many Arts and Crafts practitioners such as Walter Crane, C.F.A. Voysey, Lewis F. Day and E.S. Prior condemned Art Nouveau while often employing its curvi-linear forms and other conventions in their own designs.⁵ Neatby is not recorded as having held such views and his designs have perhaps more in common with the contemporary work of students, sometimes seen in the *Studio*, than with the productions of the leading Arts and Crafts exponents of the day. Undoubtedly, Neatby learnt much from men like Walter Crane and presumably held him and many of his colleagues in high esteem, however, as the many references to Continental arts journals that appear in his own notebooks show, he was as influenced by foreign sources as much as by those in Britain. Perhaps the position taken by the Art Workers Guild over this

⁴ For a discussion on this topic see: Stansky, P. : *Redesigning the World. William Morris, the 1880s, and the Arts and Crafts* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 120-123.

⁵ *Ibid.*, footnote 74, p. 115.

issue is the reason why Neatby did not join the organization and why he exhibited his designs, on his own behalf, on only one occasion with the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society.

The obscurity which befell Neatby's name and reputation after his death, discussed at length in the Introduction to this thesis, could have some connection with the points mentioned above. It could be argued that his exclusion from the most important design organization of his day disadvantaged Neatby both during his lifetime and after, when his achievements could have been 'actively' ignored. Certainly, his membership of the Society of Designers, discussed in Chapter 1, would not have been a professional substitute for association with the Art Workers Guild, and would perhaps explain Runtz's comment that Neatby was: '... a man of many parts, whose work, like so many others, has been ignored during his life, but whose great abilities may and should be appreciated now that the busy brain and hand are laid to rest'.⁶ However, in general, decorative arts designers rarely received the public recognition that was enjoyed by successful painters and architects, several of whom were the recipients of Knighthoods. For an individual like Neatby, membership of the Art Workers Guild was hardly likely to change his position within the established public perceptions of art *versus* design, whereby painting was seen as a profession and decorative arts design as a craft orientated pursuit, and therefore of lesser worth. These ideas also related to the acceptance of signed artwork, such as paintings, over unsigned productions such as furniture design. Painting came to be recognized as something that was continuously exhibited in museums whereas furniture was only rarely seen

⁶ Appendix B.

outside of temporary exhibitions.

Eventually, by the end of the 19th century the supremacy of the fine arts over the decorative arts became an established fact, that in terms of official recognition became connected to social class, with painting and sculpture providing the possibility of social mobility in a way that design could never achieve for its practitioners. The struggle to maintain a parity of status between the arts, a principle at the very core of both Aesthetic Movement and Arts and Crafts ideals, was effectively undermined every time a Frederic Leighton or a Lawrence Alma-Tadema accepted an official honour, so that for a designer to be seen as the equal of a fine artist would have resulted in a conflict of social perceptions. Also, the final mark of approval in both the artistic and public spheres: membership of the Royal Academy, was not a credible option for Neatby, who was neither architect or full-time painter. That particular institution was perhaps less powerful in 1900 than it had been half-a-century earlier, but it still conferred a status that was recognized in both official and public circles. Taking these factors into consideration along with changes in fashion and intellectual perceptions of art, as expressed by luminaries such as Roger Fry, it was inevitable that Neatby should be all but forgotten by history, and this fact should not be construed as a particular criticism of his work. Accordingly, the exposure of his works to public scrutiny in the present century, through publications and critical discussion, is likely to promote his re-discovery by a wider public in the same manner that C.R. Ashbee, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Christopher Dresser have enjoyed.

Although it was not intended to be a complete corpus of Neatby's work, this thesis has brought

together a large quantity of material, some of it previously unpublished, that confirms him as a major figure in architectural ceramic design. His other areas of work, while lacking the originality of his ceramic creations, nevertheless show him to have been competent in the area of three-dimensional design and to possess talents as a painter and book illustrator. The amount of material allows for the evolution of his personal style to be observed, beginning with a Renaissance style that was characteristic of many designers in the 1880s, developing into a confident Art Nouveau inspired genre in the mid 1890s and then returning to a more romanticized Renaissance style for his paintings from c.1903 onwards.

In many respects the Art Nouveau phase of his work is the most interesting because it reflects the current, often conflicting, artistic philosophies of the period, and in doing so must have transmitted the impact of those concepts to others. To call Neatby's turn-of-the-century style Art Nouveau would not be strictly accurate, although his inspiration certainly arose, in part, from Continental approaches in this idiom. However, although it could be argued that Art Nouveau displays a series of national characteristics, reflecting differing tastes, in the various artistic centres across Europe, the British, or, more correctly, English interpretation of the style is considerably different enough to warrant it being called English New Art, rather than English Art Nouveau. This may seem to be no more than an exercise in semantics but the curious blend of differing themes that contributed to what was considered to represent a modern style made it a reality.

The situation that created English New Art was peculiar to this country and is connected not

just to artistic movements but to the economic forces that allowed them to prosper. Britain's economic and political strength at the end of the 19th century not only created a market place for decorative art on an unprecedented scale but also caused its development in a particularly parochial fashion. The strength of both the Aesthetic Movement and the Arts and Crafts Movement in England meant that neither side found it easy to gain an ascendancy over the other. The debacle caused by the Oscar Wilde trial of 1895 discouraged the outward display of contrived 'artistic' behaviour, but foreign 'artistic tendencies' were still extant in the minds of many artists and designers, and this led to a unique blending of Aesthetic and Arts and Crafts philosophies. The result was an art style that combined aesthetic romanticism with a crafts inspired mediaevalism, making Barnard's description of the Harrods Meat Hall tile frieze as Art Nouveau seem quite credible even though its subject matter is consistently historicist.⁷

In the search for a new style for their time, English architects and designers found it particularly difficult to reject cultural concepts of a historical vernacular style, despite the influx of ideas from abroad. The notion that a new style could only be inspired by a source untainted by historicism, for example plants and the female human form, was accepted to a degree by many English ornamentalists but rarely to the extent that they were able to subjugate their Arts and Crafts mediaevalist tendencies. Motifs inspired by nature, stylized forms and Japanese-style graphic techniques all appeared in the work of English artists and designers, but frequently together with Arts and Crafts associations which by their very nature were conservative. Neatby's achievement was that he was able to produce works in this English New Art style that

⁷ Barnard, Julian : *Victorian Ceramic Tiles* (London : Studio Vista, 1972), p. 130.

were both commercially attractive to clients and visually acceptable to the art consumer in general. His works tend to display a fresh and novel air that overcomes the somewhat stagnant Arts and Crafts elements in his designs.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to quantify, or even necessarily to identify specifically, the effects of Neatby's work on his peers in the art and design community. Certainly, in his use of the stylization of natural forms, such as in the square 'trees' that accompany his 'Zodiac' figures in Skipper's Norwich Arcade, he was at the forefront of artistic theory and practice and his use of such devices should have been chronologically early enough to have made an impact on other designers. Also, his versatility in creating designs in so many different media can hardly have been ignored by his associates. Furthermore, where the products of his peers were usually in private homes or art galleries, many of Neatby's finest works were outside in the streets of London and other towns, where they could not be ignored.

In terms of architectural ornament Neatby's murals and schemes of terracotta decoration place him in a unique position in the world of late Victorian art and design. Although a similar vision of polychromatic architecture was entertained by Halsey Ricardo his personal achievements undertaken in pursuit of his theories were neither as numerous or as inventive as Neatby's figurative and patterned mural schemes. In respect of architectural polychromatic mural facade design at this period it is necessary to look to Europe for parallels, for example the studio house of Paul Cauchie in Brussels (1905), but these are usually painted on plaster rather than

on ceramic tile.⁸ Otto Wagner's *Majolikahaus*, Vienna, discussed in Chapter 3, is a rare example of painted ceramic mural art on a scale comparable to Neatby's works.

In terms of decorative design some of the forms of Neatby's metalwork and furniture are similar to the products of other designers of the period, but even here his use of inlays, painted panels and enamelling add an element of originality and sophistication. The very breadth of his vision marks out his work from that of his peers, such as George Ellwood and Charles Spooner (1862-1938), who did not work in such a variety of media or number of techniques as did Neatby. Although his furniture designs can appear to be derivative, when Vallance, speaking of the plain and severe lines of Neatby's furniture, comments that his furniture, 'cannot be said to assimilate to any given period', perhaps he is indicating an originality in Neatby's work that is perhaps not as obvious today.⁹ Implicit in Vallance's statement is the suggestion that Neatby achieved an ideal that so many other designers strove for yet failed to attain, a style devoid of historicism, a style for the new century.

In his wallpaper designs and his paintings, the same considerable talents that gave rise to his ceramic murals are obvious. His wallpapers have a strength of line and form in their designs, yet avoid typical Victorian disarray in their layout by abstaining from the concentrated use of interlocking motifs which would clutter the design. Here, as with his furniture designs, Neatby

⁸ For the Cauchie house see: Masini, L.-V. : *Art Nouveau* (London : 2nd. edition, Thames and Hudson, 1987), pl. 292.

⁹ Vallance, Aymer : 'Mr W.J. Neatby and His Work', *Studio*, xxix (1903), p. 116.

keeps to clean, simple lines. The tendency for uncomplicated yet strong compositions can also be seen in his decorative painting, where single female profile studies are characteristic of his best work. In short, his art and graphic design was executed with the utmost efficiency of line, as was all his work.

In conclusion, this thesis has revealed William James Neatby to be a versatile and innovative artist and designer. By providing a biographical outline for both his personal life and career in combination with an analysis of his works, it is to be hoped that enough material is available here to establish him as a personality of great merit within the artistic *milieu* of the period 1880-1910.

APPENDICES

No. 1. Birth Certificate: W.J. Neatby.

503

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number 4005015

1881. Marriage solemnized at the Registrar Office in the District of Ecclesall Bierlow in the County of York									
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.	
123	Twenty eighth May 1881	William James Neatby	23 years	Bachelor	Architect	Mopwood Street, Barnsley	Samuel Neatby	Iron Merchant	
		Emily Arnold	28 years	Spinster		Victoria Road, Hecley	William Arnold	Iron Founder	
Married in the Registrar Office according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the									
by me,									
William Henry Newell Registrar									
This Marriage was solemnized between us,									
William James Neatby in the Presence of us,									
Emily Arnold									
Harry Branner									
William Hayes									
Allan Beardsley Deputy Superintendent Registrar									

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a register of Marriages in the Registration District of

Given at the General Register Office, under the Seal of the said Office, the

22nd day of August 19 95

Edw Ball Clerk

MX 921657

AP


This certificate is issued in pursuance of section 47 of the Marriage Act 1949. Sub-section 3 of that section provides that any certified copy of an entry purporting to be sealed or stamped in the seal of the General Register Office shall be received as evidence of the marriage to which it relates without any further or other proof or other evidence, and no certified copy purporting to have been given in that behalf shall be of any force or effect unless it is sealed or stamped as aforesaid.

CAUTION—It is an offence to falsify a certificate or to make or knowingly use a false certificate or a copy of a false certificate, intending it to be accepted as genuine to the prejudice of any person, or to possess a certificate knowing it to be false without lawful authority.

WARNING: THIS CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF THE IDENTITY OF THE PERSON PRESENTING IT.

No. 3. Birth Certificate: Emily Arnold.

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF BIRTH



GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number 7009015.

REGISTRATION DISTRICT Barnsley.


BIRTH in the Sub-district of Barnsley in the County of Yorkshire.

Columns:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10*
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
100	Emily July 1887 Barnsley	Emily	Girl	William Arnold	Margaret primary Carnell	Widow-Margaret Barnsley	Margaret Mother Barnsley	August 1887	William Registrar	William

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Births in the District above mentioned.

Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 22nd day of August 19th 95.

BXBZ 833733




CAUTION: It is an offence to falsify a certificate or to make or knowingly use a false certificate or a copy of a false certificate intending it to be accepted as genuine to the prejudice of any person or to possess a certificate knowing it to be false without lawful authority.

WARNING: THIS CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF THE IDENTITY OF THE PERSON PRESENTING IT.

DD 8195451 300717 100M 295 M00010068

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF BIRTH



GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number 7009015


REGISTRATION DISTRICT Barnsley

1884 BIRTH in the Sub-district of Barnsley in the County of York

Columns:-	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10*
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
<u>Noted</u> <u>April</u> <u>45th</u> <u>Stoke's Lane</u> <u>Summer Lane</u> <u>Barnsley, 1884</u>	<u>William</u> <u>Douglas</u>	<u>Boy</u>		<u>William</u> <u>James</u> <u>Neatby</u>	<u>Emily</u> <u>Neatby</u> <u>formerly</u> <u>Arnold</u>	<u>Architect</u> <u>and</u> <u>Surveyor</u>	<u>E. Neatby</u> <u>Worked</u> <u>Stoke's Lane</u> <u>May</u> <u>1884</u> <u>Barnsley</u>		<u>Henry W. Williams</u> <u>Second Deputy</u> <u>May</u> <u>1884</u> <u>Barnsley</u>	

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Births in the District above mentioned.

Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 23rd day of August 19 95



BXBZ 833978

* See note overleaf


CAUTION:- It is an offence to falsify a certificate or to make or knowingly use a false certificate or a copy of a false certificate intending it to be accepted as genuine to the prejudice of any person or to possess a certificate knowing it to be false without lawful authority.

WARNING: THIS CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF THE IDENTITY OF THE PERSON PRESENTING IT.

DN 5395451 00717 10034 295 MCR010665

[Printed by authority of the Registrar General.]

CERTIFIED COPY of an
Pursuant to the Births and
Deaths Registration Act 1953



ENTRY OF DEATH
Deaths Registration Act 1953

HC

Registration District
Leeds

1885. Death in the Sub-district of West Leeds in the County of York

Columns:—	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description, and residence of informant	When registered	Signature registr
184	Tenth August 1885 16 Lovell Grove USD	Emily Neatby	female	33 years	Wife of William James Neatby Draughts -man	Phthisis Worse 5 months Certified by H.G. Stacey M.R.C.S.	Wm J. Neatby Widower of deceased Present at the death 16 Lovell Grove Leeds	Eleventh August 1885	John Fourn

Certified to be a true copy of an entry in a register in my custody.

S.W. Quibson.

Superintendent Reg
- 3 JUN 1993

CAUTION:—It is an offence to falsify a certificate or to make or knowingly use a false certificate or a copy of a false certificate intending it to be accepted as genuine to the prejudice of any person, or to possess a certificate knowing it to be false without lawful authority.

No. 8. Marriage Certificate: W.J. Neatby and Jane Isabella Dempster.

CERTIFIED COPY of an
Pursuant to the

ENTRY OF MARRIAGE
Marriage Act 1949

Registration District Leeds

Mariage solemnized at the Registrar Office
District of Leeds County of York

No.	When married	Name and surname	Age	Condition	Rank or profession	Residence at the time of marriage	Father's name and surname	Rank or profession of father
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Seventeenth	William James Neatby	27 years	Widower	Artist	23 Leopold Terrace Leeds	Samuel Mossforth Neatby	Timber Merchant	
October 14 1887	Sane Isabella Dempster	20 years	Spinster		12 Farnham Road Saint Giles, Oxford	High Dempster (deceased)	Butler	
Married in the Registrar Office by certificate before me,								
This marriage as solemnized between us,			Joseph Trumper George Graham Durham		WA Bedawith Registrar Robert S H Sedgwick Superintendent Registrar			
					DEPUTY C. E. M. 101-76 - 9 DEC 1991			

Certified to be a true copy of an entry in a register in my custody.

TION.—It is an offence to falsify a certificate or to make or knowingly use a false certificate or a copy of a certificate intending it to be accepted as genuine to the prejudice of any person, or to possess a certificate knowing it to be false without lawful authority.

[Printed by authority of the Registrar-General.]

**CERTIFIED COPY of an
Pursuant to the Births and
Deaths Registration Act 1953**

Registration District Leeds

1888. Birth in the Sub-district of West Leeds

Columns:—		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Name, and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description, and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name after registration		
404	Twentysixth September 1888 27 St John's Avenue U.S.D.	Edward Mossforth	William James Neatby	Jane Isabella Neatby formerly Dempster	Artist (Painter)	W. J. Neatby Father 27 St John's Avenue Leeds	First November 1888	Jno Wm Fourness Registrar.			


Certified to be a true copy of an entry in a register in my custody.

CAUTION—It is an offence to falsify a certificate or to make or knowingly use a false certificate or a copy of a false certificate intending it to be accepted as genuine to the prejudice of any person, or to possess a certificate knowing it to be false without lawful authority.

J. E. M. T. J. E. M. T. J. E. M. T. **DEPUTY** Superintendent R

28 NOV 1991

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF BIRTH



GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number X007310

REGISTRATION DISTRICT

1891

BIRTH in the Sub-district of Wimbledon in the County of Surrey

Columns: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10*

No.

When and where born

Name, if any

Sex

Name and surname of father

Name, surname and maiden surname of mother

Occupation of father

Signature, description and residence of informant

When registered

Signature of registrar

Name entered after registration

125

Sixty-ninth October 1891
41 Latimer Road
W. S.D.

Magdalen Ruth Dempster

Girl

William James Neatby

Jane Donbilla Neatby formerly Dempster

Artist (Ceramic)

Wm. J. Neatby, Father
47. Latimer Road
Wimbledon
Twenty-fifth November 1891


Registrar

Magdalen Neatby

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Births in the District above mentioned.

Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 6th day of September 1996

BXBY 034666



*See note overleaf

CAUTION:- It is an offence to falsify a certificate or to make or knowingly use a false certificate or a copy of a false certificate intending it to be accepted as genuine to the prejudice of any person or to possess a certificate knowing it to be false without lawful authority.

WARNING: THIS CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF THE IDENTITY OF THE PERSON PRESENTING IT.


FD 771 354663 105M 60/6 Mar 01/5686

512

Printed by authority of the Registrar General.

HC 21

CERTIFIED COPY of an
ENTRY OF DEATH
Pursuant to the Births and
Deaths Registration Act 1953



Registration District

St Marylebone

1910

Death in the Sub-district of

All Souls

in the County of London

No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description, and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of Registrar
487	Twentieth April 1910	William James Neatby	Male	49 years	Artist - Painter of 4 wentworth studios Mannesa Road Chelsea SW	Dilatation of heart	E Mossforth Neatby 4 wentworth studios Mannesa Road Chelsea SW	Twentieth April 1910	J Clark

Certified to be a true copy of an entry in a register in my custody.

Frederick Green

Superintendent Registrar

11.12.911

CAUTION:—It is an offence to falsify a certificate or to make or knowingly use a false certificate or a copy of a false certificate intending it to be accepted as genuine to the prejudice of any person, or to possess a certificate knowing it to be false without lawful authority.

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF DEATH						Deaths Registration Act 1953		HC 2	
Registration District						County of Buckingham			
Wycombe									
Death in the Sub-district of						in the			
Wycombe									
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description, and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
314	First April 1936 BOWOOD Walters Ash Hughenden R.D.	Jane Isabella NEATBY	female	68 years	Widow of William James NEATBY Artist	1a. Lobar Pneumonia 11 Paralysis Agitans certified by D.J.B. Wilson M.B.	M.E. Jones Present at the death The Mission House Naphill Hughenden	Second April 1936	W.R. Butl
Certified to be a true copy of an entry in a register in my custody.									
<i>P. H. Mansfield</i>							Superintendent Registrar 4th December, 1991		

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APPENDIX B

OBITUARY

Taken from the *Architect and Contract Reporter*, lxxxiv, July 22nd (1910), p. 55.

THE LATE W.J. NEATBY.

AN APPRECIATION BY ERNEST RUNTZ, F.R.I.B.A.

The death of Mr. Neatby will have caused sincere regret to those architects who had the pleasure of being associated with him. Modest to a degree and without an atom of commercialism in his constitution, he was an artist in the best sense and was never more happy than when he was associated with an architect in the clothing and adornment of a building.

I know nothing of his earlier days or what was the incentive in placing him in the position to exercise his talents. I first met him at Messrs. DOULTON'S, where he had succeeded TINWELL as modeller, and I venture to say that NEATBY'S work with that firm was not only pure, but original, for he had a keen appreciation of the necessities and suitability of ornament in connection with architectural proportion and detail. Constant intercourse with this artist and gentleman enabled me to see the brilliancy of his many-sided abilities, whilst I was filled with regret that his genius was not properly appreciated.

As an architect one had only to indicate the general idea of a decorative feature, whether in

modelling or in mural decorative work, and NEATBY caught the spirit of the undertaking and seemed to think of nothing but perfecting the seeds of an inspiration; he worked with one - he was receptive - and on only one occasion have I known him to rebel against a general scheme of decorative work, and for that I can excuse him, for his whole heart in this instance was wrapped up in his particular conception.

His versatility was remarkable; he was a worker in metal, glass, and ceramic work, and in addition was a masterly executant of oil-painting for decorative work, and a dainty exponent in water-colours and miniatures. Many choice works of his are spread about the country, and a few remain as a legacy to his widow.

Of recent years Mr. NEATBY has been, I believe, chief designer of wall papers to Messrs. LINE & SON, and it needs only to refer to his charming advertisement, "Studies in Harmony," which is to be seen in the Underground rolling stock, to indicate the refinement of mind and execution which always characterised his work. To my mind NEATBY and his work were never fully appreciated; but for those who knew him, his unostentatious ways, and his undoubted genius, there has arisen a gap which will take a lot of filling, although his son is following in his father's footsteps.

Personally I feel I have lost a friend and an ally in my art and profession - I know of no one who can quite take his place. I believe there are other architects, too, who will feel the loss of his gifts, which have helped to make our buildings beautiful, and I have therefore written this

appreciation of a man of many parts, whose work, like so many others, has been ignored during his life, but whose great abilities may and should be appreciated now that the busy brain and hand are laid to rest.

APPENDIX C

EXHIBITIONS AT LIVERPOOL

Works by W.J. Neatby exhibited at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool - Autumn Exhibitions of Modern Art.

Year: 1906

Exhibit No. 1455: Case of Miniatures

100	<i>The festival</i> (on old vellum)	£10	10
101	<i>Venezia</i> (on old vellum)	£ 9	9
102	<i>A quiet mind</i> (on old vellum)	£ 9	9
103	<i>Romola</i> (on old vellum)	£12	12

Artist's name and address: William J. Neatby, A.R.M.S., 56 Glebe Place, London S.W.

Year: 1907

Miniatures

Exhibit No. 1648

20	<i>La Bella Mia</i>	£21	00
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Exhibit No. 1649

21	<i>The Duchess</i>	£18	18
----	--------------------	-----	----

Exhibit No. 1669

84	<i>Cloth of gold</i>	£21	00
----	----------------------	-----	----

Exhibit No. 1670

85	<i>The old king</i>	£18	18
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Artist's name and address: William J. Neatby, R.M.S., 4 Wentworth Studios, Chelsea, London S.W.

Year: 1908

Exhibit No. 1633: Case of Miniatures

28	<i>Dolcebella</i>	£26	5
29	<i>Isabel</i>	£15	15
30	<i>Dear Heart</i>	£12	12
31	<i>A Patrician dame</i>	£26	5

Artist's name and address: W.J. Neatby, R.M.S., 4 Wentworth Studios, Chelsea, London S.W.

Year: 1909

Exhibit No. 1669: Case of Miniatures

58	<i>In a looking glass - on old vellum (copyright reserved)</i>	£21	00
59	<i>The wreck - on old vellum (copyright reserved)</i>	£21	00

Artist's name and address: W.J. Neatby, R.M.S., 4 Wentworth Studios, Manresa Road, Chelsea, London

APPENDIX D

EXHIBITION AT THE MODERN GALLERY

An Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture by: Mrs. Bernard M. Jenkin (Margaret M. Giles); Miss Mabel J. Young; Mr. W.J. Neatby; Mr. Reginald Waud (London : Modern Gallery, 1905).

Catalogue

Modern Gallery,
61 New Bond Street, W.,
Edward Freeman, Lessee & Secretary,
Will Close Saturday 2nd December [1905].

Entries by William J. Neatby:

		£	s
2.	<i>Ladywalk, Heronsgate, Herts.</i>	£3	3
3.	<i>Baby</i>	£3	3
4.	<i>The White Cloud</i>	£4	4
5.	<i>The Old Canal, Bude</i>	£3	3
6.	<i>Sheringham</i>	£10	10
7.	<i>Chelsea</i>	£5	5
8.	<i>Afternoon</i> (mounted on vellum)	£5	5
9.	<i>Jessie</i>	£2	2
10.	<i>The Park</i>	£2	2
29.	<i>Chalfont St. Giles</i>	£7	7
30.	<i>Cloth of Gold</i> (vellum)	£12	12
31.	<i>The Counsellor</i>	£3	3
32.	<i>My Lady Disdain</i>	£5	5
33.	<i>La Bella Mia</i> (vellum)	£15	15
34.	<i>Isabel</i>	£7	7
35.	<i>A Quiet Mind</i> (vellum)	£8	8
36.	<i>Black and Orange</i>	(No price)	
37.	<i>The Slad Valley, Glos.</i>	£7	7
38.	<i>Prudence</i> (vellum)	£6	6
39.	<i>Helen</i> (vellum)	£7	7
40.	<i>Autumn Leaves</i> (mounted on vellum)	£4	4

41.	<i>A Lady of High Degree</i>	£5	5
42.	<i>The Old King</i> (mounted on vellum)	£10	10
43.	<i>Monna Rosa</i> (vellum)	£18	18
44.	<i>The Green Gown</i>	£5	5
45.	<i>A Castle in Spain</i>	£5	5
46.	<i>Iseult</i> (vellum)	£7	7
47.	<i>Jewel</i> (vellum)	£8	8
48.	<i>Thelma</i>	£5	5
49.	<i>Fantasia</i> (mounted on vellum)	£3	3
50.	<i>The Burn</i>	£7	7
51.	<i>A Chaplet of Gold</i> (vellum)	£6	6
52.	<i>Night</i>	£5	5
53.	<i>The Burgomaster</i>	£3	3
54.	<i>The Golden Argosy</i>	£6	6
55.	<i>Esmeralda</i> (vellum)	£5	5
56.	<i>Beatrice</i>	£4	4
57.	<i>The Princess</i> (vellum)	£5	5
66.	<i>Dear Heart</i> (vellum)	£6	6
67.	<i>The Brocaded Cloak</i> (vellum)	£7	7
68.	<i>Pastel</i>	£2	2
69.	<i>A Peasant</i>	£10	10
70.	<i>Venezia</i> (vellum)	£7	7
71.	<i>Monica</i> (vellum)	£7	7
72.	<i>A Patrician</i> (vellum)	£12	12
73.	<i>The Duchess</i> (vellum)	£8	8
74.	<i>Wind and Rain</i>	£8	8
75.	<i>Priscilla</i>	£3	3
76.	<i>Marjory</i>	£2	2
77.	<i>A Divine</i>	£3	3
78.	<i>The Red Hat</i>		

APPENDIX E

THE NEATBY NOTEBOOKS

Throughout this thesis reference is made to a series of notebooks that contain a variety of notes and sketches made by W.J. Neatby between the years 1901-1909. These notebooks comprise eleven volumes of which eight are small notebooks while the other three are larger sketchbooks. The smaller volumes measure 203 x 130mm. and the larger 260 x 177mm., with one measuring 310 x 253mm. The notebooks were acquired by the present writer from the late Mrs Vivienne Neatby, wife of Edward Mossforth Neatby, and daughter-in-law of W.J. Neatby. The smaller notebooks usually display W.J. Neatby's name and address on the inside of the front cover. In one instance, three addresses are given, including the Percy Street showroom of Neatby, Evans and Co.

While the larger sketchbooks contain numerous drawings of trees and details such as leaves and flowers, the smaller volumes contain an enormous variety of miscellanea from literary references and notes on painting techniques to sketches for decorative arts designs and shopping lists. The function of these volumes was to act as an aide-mémoire and as such they were where Neatby recorded the titles of articles or magazines that he had read and where he copied down what he considered to be the good ideas of others, gleaned from his researches, and made preliminary drawings for notional future projects. The contents are, in many ways, the equivalent of a note made on the back of a postcard or on a cigarette packet.

In keeping with the nature of such unorganized records, the notebooks are devoid of any form of pagination other than in the way the pages are affixed in each book. The volumes are not dated in any way and most of the drawings are unrelated to any recognized context. Most of the drawings are little better than 'doodles', and as such have not been included *en masse* in the main body of the thesis. Where it was felt that information from one or more of the notebooks could elucidate a point in the text, then reference has been made to such material. In an effort to formalize and add to the credibility of information from the notebooks, an attempt has been made to organize the various volumes into some sort of chronological and sequential order. This has been made possible by the appearance, in the various volumes, of identifiable references, either drawn or textual, to dated projects associated with Neatby, or the inclusion of mentions of dated journal publications which indicate a *terminus post quem* for the rest of the contents in a given notebook. Unfortunately, this methodology is somewhat negated by the suggestion that Neatby seems to have used more than one notebook at a time, creating chronological 'overlaps' between one book and another, and also by the possibility that some volumes were used over a period of several years. However, for the purpose of reference, the notebooks have been allotted numbers, and allowing for such drawbacks, the following dates are suggested for particular volumes:

Neatby Notebook No. 1 : c.1901-02;

Neatby Notebook No. 2 : 1901-03;

Neatby Notebook No. 3 : 1902-03;

Neatby Notebook No. 4 : *c.*1903-04;

Neatby Notebook No. 5 : *c.*1904-05;

Neatby Notebook No. 6 : 1906;

Neatby Notebook No. 7 : 1907;

Neatby Notebook No. 8 : 1909;

Neatby Notebook No. 9 : *c.*1903-1908;

Neatby Notebook No.10 : 1908;

Neatby Notebook No.11 : 1909.

In general, those notebooks dating to before 1906 contain more sketches relating to the design of decorative arts objects while those after that date are more concerned with landscape drawings and sketches of details of trees and other plants. This would seem to reflect the changing emphasis of Neatby's work, from three-dimensional design to easel painting and wallpaper design, that is suggested in Chapter 8. Items of particular interest, to be found in these notebooks, are cited in the main text.

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